

# STRAYED REVELLERS

*By Allan Updegraff*



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# STRAYED REVELLERS

*A Novel of Modernistic Truth and  
Intruding War*

BY

ALLAN UPDEGRAFF

I didn't know Truth was such an invalid. How long is it since she could only take the air in a closed carriage . . . ?

*The Professor at the Breakfast Table*

Half-engaged in the soil, pawing to get free, man needs all that can be brought to disengage him. . . . If war . . . can set his dull nerves throbbing, and by loud taps on the tough chrysalis can break its walls and let the new creature emerge erect and free,—make way and sing paean!—EMERSON



NEW YORK  
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY  
1918

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THE QUINN & BODEN CO. PRESS  
RAHWAY, N. J.

TO

HIS NIBS

With regret that he won't care for it—  
at least not for some years.

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## CHAPTER I

A PREAMBLE—IN THE COURSE OF WHICH A MODERN YOUNG LADY ARRIVES, MAKES A CONQUEST, AND STARTS TO CLIMB A MOUNTAIN

CLOTILDE—Clotilde Smith Westbrook: it needed neither a member of the Vibrationist Cult, nor anyone with more than a faint interest in Nomatism, to discover that there might be a great deal in her name as considered in combination with the person to whom it applied. Clotilde's name suited her. That may have been because she had grown up to fit it, as several little groups of serious thinkers would maintain, or because similar circumstances had determined both herself and her name, thus making them harmonious, or, possibly, and as more to the liking of skeptical Materialists, it was an accident. Clotilde herself had passed through at least three theories to arrive, with crashing suddenness, at the accident one. At any rate, there were certain suggestions of French *esprit*, a certain determined, almost obtrusive, commonness, and a basic high-breeding common both to Clotilde and her name.

It was a name, too, that might have suggested to discerning Nomatists that its bearer would create some stir in her comings and goings. If it did, so much the better for the discerning Nomatists. It is certain that the

rumor of her impending arrival in Woodbridge spread through the community with a swiftness that implied importance. The rumor stirred up, in the words of the cleverest Woodbridgian gossip, "a good deal of agoginess, especially among the under-married males."

"I *love* Clotilde—I suppose she'll sweep grandly up to the Inn in a ten-thousand-dollar roadster and begin to start sensations at the rate of seven a day—well, Woodbridge *has* been rather slow of recent date," added this same dispenser of the cleverest brand of Woodbridge gossip, and rested on her honors, secure in the faith that she would have time for several more *bon mots* in the stage-wait between Clotilde's heralding and her appearance.

But Clotilde side-tracked this threatened cleverness by appearing that same afternoon, so unostentatiously as to suggest an incognito, on the lowly old horse-drawn stage that connects Woodbridge with West Beacon, the railroad, and other troubles of the outside world. She did not get out at the Inn; while the several other passengers unloaded, she kept her place on the back seat of the old surrey, with her head bowed a little, and her eyes looking out from just below the brim of her wide blue summer hat: looking out, indeed, as if she would have done more than bow her head to escape recognition if such concealment hadn't been beneath her dignity.

"Was you wanting to go somewhere, Miss?" asked the anomalously youthful and sprightly driver of the old and rheumatic rig, returning from a whirl of making change, giving directions, sorting out baggage.

Clotilde nodded. "I want to go up to Henry Hooghtyling's."

"Yes'm! Take you right down to the barn and hook onto a lighter rig."

"Is it far?"

"Yes'm. Not very. 'Bout two miles. Half-way up Teyce Ten Eyck Mountain."

"All right," agreed Clotilde restlessly. But by the time they drew up before the stage-owner's big purple barn, she had changed her mind. "I think—" she said, coming to earth with a springy little leap that set her filmy summer clothes and her wide blue hat-brim bobbing: "I think I'll just walk up—it's a fine afternoon for a walk. I can leave my suitcase with you, can't I—and you can send it right up if I telephone for it?"

"Why—yes'm." The youth was as crestfallen as if he had been denied a dance. "But say—the Hooghtylings ain't got no telephone," he added, brightening. "The nearest one's down to the Brookses'. That's near a mile. I could drive you right up—"

"I think I'll walk, anyway. You see, they're not expecting me. I wonder if you happen to know whether they take boarders?"

"I can't say's I ever heard they did. They live quite a ways from the village. But most anybody around here'll take boarders." Crestfallen once more, with his blue Irish eyes fastened on Clotilde's brown Gallic ones, he kept up a desultory process of unhitching. Clotilde considered the matter, and him. He was pink-cheeked, snub-nosed, freckled, Reilly by patronymic, and "Skeeter" by common name. The promise of a new motor-bus, his to pilot and tinker with, had kept him for the past six months a slave to the two old nags and the rickety surrey before him. He often went about with

the vacant eyes and relaxed features of one busy with inward visions, visions, no doubt, in which all the parts and passions of a brand new motor-bus were revealed. Just then, however, it appeared that another vision eclipsed even the bus.

"It wouldn't cost you nothin'—if I was to drive you part o' the way," he hazarded. "Glad to do that for our customers. It's a pretty steep climb up there."

But he made the offer without much show of hope, and was not surprised by Clotilde's polite refusal. He gawked after her, head turned over his shoulder, as she walked out along the driveway to the main road.

She walked more springily, even if her brows wore a little frown of irritation, because she knew he was watching her. She was nearing the time of full bloom, well past that first burgeoning when to be gaped at had been her elixir of youth; all things considered, she really didn't like to attract stares. Very emphatically to herself, and a bit too frankly to others, she asserted the sickly innocuousness of glances that, as long as youth is youth, will have a meaning, will make the average recipient, male or female, carry chin a little higher, add a little self-consciousness to eyes and stride. Since she could not altogether suppress these natural reactions, her too frank and frequent complaints about being stared at were misinterpreted; and, by force of this very misinterpretation, she lost her frankness a little, became a little affected in her attitude. This slight affectation, an outgrowth of her rebellion against all affectations, was an important part of the character she had been born with, attained, and had thrust upon her. She was too determined to be frank to really attain any complete frankness; often

enough her efforts made her downright untrue to herself and to young-womanhood in general. Because she was so determinedly true to the truth as she saw it, she was as thorough a *poseuse* in her way as any demure and artful little minx of the middle of the last century. It was in intention rather than in achievement that she registered an advance.

Out on the open road, beyond the serried village houses, she lost both her self-consciousness and her over-emphasized irritation against the cause of it. With eyes for frank appreciation of the checkered country, here a little farmhouse surrounded by fields and wood-lots in the general pattern of a crazy-quilt, there the roof of an artist's, metal-worker's, weaver's, writer's, or mere summerite's bungalow showing amidst tree-branches, she gave herself up to the joys offered by a good walk when one has a body and spirit suited to it.

She walked, she did not trip along. Heel and toe took the ground naturally, and there was a slight relaxing of the knee at the beginning of each sizable stride that sent her forward in a shockless rhythm of motion. Her arms swung, and her shoulders swayed, even her head nodded a little, keeping time, adding ease and balance, in a way so free and natural that strict deportmentalsists might have dubbed it "slouchy" or "mannish." There was no sense of restriction either in movement or clothes. All her habiliments seemed chosen with an eye to the grace and efficiency and freedom they might contribute to the person inside.

There were her shoes, cocoa-brown in color, solid and shapely without being heavy, firmly heeled to the height of not more than an inch, fitting with the neatness of a

glove from toe to ankle, modernistic American triumphs of a long-bungled art. Her suit, of dark tan pongee, lacked any suggestion either of the variously popular draped-tablecloth or sheath effects in ladies' wear. The perfect-fitting box coat swung open, showing the front of a simple white-silk shirtwaist, ornamented with an orange-and-blue spray of silk embroidery on either side of the row of small pearl buttons down the front; its large Dutch collar was open at the throat, and a blue-edged handkerchief peeped conveniently from the breast pocket. Her wide hat, of artfully braided straw, smoky-blue in color, shaped like a small toadstool superimposed on a larger one, was saved from severity by three woolen pompons, shading from pale yellow at the edges to burnt orange centers, set at an angle that might have been described as three-quarters front. It covered her head from the hair-line on her forehead to the nape of her neck, and, when she looked up, formed a strikingly effective dark frame for her color and keen lines of her striking face.

Even Clotilde's enemies, with almost a baker's dozen of whom she was variously troubled and blessed, admitted that she had a striking face. It displayed most of the elements that go to suggest "striking" as applied to a face—an alertness, a purposefulness, a definiteness of line, and a certain not unhealthy discontent: at least a discontent not especially unhealthy when revealed in youthful half-realization of self and of self's world. Her cheekbones were a bit high, and there was a bit too much of a hollow at the temples, caused by the sweeping width of the forehead above, to permit her facial contour to display the much-prized perfect oval, but she gained

in character for the loss in perfection. Her eyebrows, on the other hand, were perfect, perhaps her only perfect feature: full, delicately penciled in dark brown, containing as adequate a representation of the artist's "line of beauty" as is often found in nature. Clement Townes, the Greenwich Village poet, had once emulated Shakespeare's hero by writing a sonnet "To His Lady's Eyebrows." This was immediately before Clotilde threw him over with a clatter that was heard even in the far corners of the earth, including Woodbridge. Undoubtedly his dragging of Clotilde's eyes into the sextet of a sonnet that had started out to be about eyebrows had something to do with it. "Why," demanded Clotilde, "did he say my eyes were feline luminous in the dark? He's never even seen them in the dark!" Someone later suggested that this was probably for the sake of a rhyme. But by that time it was too late; Clement had taken his shattered life in his hands and gone to France to drive an ambulance. Thus he escaped, at least, any danger from the draft, which, in spite of a doubtful physique, might have garnered him into the coarse associations of Yaphank.

Clotilde's eyes were certainly not feline, though they might well have seemed luminous to any cavalier fortunate enough to behold them in the dark. They were a warm, rich brown, with, oddly enough, no variation of color in either iris: French eyes both by appearance and by rightful inheritance from her mother, although without one small iota of the coquetry that is commonly supposed to be inseparable from the French eye feminine. Their wide-open, steady, penetrating frankness was almost alarming. "Whenever Clotilde looks at me," once

commented the cleverest Woodbridgian gossip, "I always think she's on the point of revealing the darkest secrets of her soul or demanding to know mine!" However, at another time, the same authority, who possessed the attribute of greatness of not fearing apparent contradictions, was moved to declare: "Clotilde reminds me of a perfect kid—one of these awfully conscientious, awfully well-brought-up kids, you know. She has a way of looking at you just like one—as if she'd never done anything in God's world to conceal. Honestly, I *love* Clotilde!"

In all of which personal analysis, both expressed and implied, Woodbridge's social oracle maintained her reputation for astuteness. There *was* something kiddish about Clotilde, something especially kiddish as she strode along the winding country road, face uplifted, tinted with peach-blow color in either cheek, eyes bland and untroubled as an infant's, red lips parted over even white teeth, her whole slender body thrown, with a kind of kiddish abandon, into the business of getting ahead. "Boyish" she might have been called, not only for the clean-cut freshness of her face, but for the slimness of her hips, the unexaggerated curves of her uncorseted waist, the flatness of her bosom on which the round little twin promontories were hardly noticeable even when the wind threw her into momentary reliefs suggestive of the Winged Victory: "boyish" she might have been called if it be permitted to speak of a delicately-featured, perfect-complexioned, smooth-limbed boy as "girlish." Lacking this permission, the "boyish" must at once be withdrawn, and "finely girlish" substituted. Essentially she was that, finely, athletically, delicately girlish, with the girlishness which women of her general type have no

difficulty in keeping beyond the twenty-four years which she frankly, and truthfully, owned.

Something of all this, and a subtle infinitude more, was Clotilde as she walked in beauty, not like the justly-celebrated night, but rather like the clear and crisp September early afternoon, up the zigzagging brown road that leads past Henry Hooghtyling's farm on Teyce Ten Eyck Mountain.

## CHAPTER II

### HENRY MEETS A PERSON WHO REMINDS HIM OF THE DAYS WHEN HE WAS FRESH AS A CUCUMBER PICKED IN THE MORNIN'

ONE of Mr. Hooghtyling's chief occupations was resting his bones. He did it with regret, sandwiching numerous chores and even an occasional complete day's labor in between, but, time and villainously hard work in the bluestone quarries of the mountainside having reduced him to much the physical state of a broken-down work-horse, he had no choice. "I'm not good for nawthin' no more," he used to complain when, after a round of labors that would have sent a youth like Clement Townes to the hospital, he was forced to "set for a spell." "No, Henry really ain't good for nawthin'," Mrs. Hooghtyling would admit with a sigh, echoing her spouse in that as in most other opinions.

On the afternoon of Clotilde's arrival, Henry had been forehandedly struggling with his winter wood supply. Half an hour's vigorous swinging of the ax in his wood-shed was "spelled" by five minutes of rest, meditation, and pipe-smoking on his front porch. He was on his way to one of these rests, slouching past the house with the general air of an exhausted but hurried turkey gobbler, when Clotilde appeared, a hundred yards down the road.

Henry, forgetting his breeding, stopped to stare at her;

she was worth staring at because any phenomenon in the way of a stranger on the road was worth that, if for no other reason, and Henry's old eyes, which couldn't distinguish large print near at hand, were keen as a squirrel's at a hundred yards. Almost at once he remembered himself and resumed his rapid slouch toward the front porch, glancing at her only casually, with a certain detachment, such as any other proper gentleman might have displayed when confronted with the vision of flushed youth, good clothes, and girlish beauty that Clotilde presented at that moment.

He sat down in the comfortable little armless rocker that was waiting for him on the porch, cleared his throat sharply, glanced once more at Clotilde, and fumbled in the pocket of his overall jacket for his pipe. She was fifty yards nearer now, but still distinct as a cameo in his vision. He turned his eyes away, brought out his aged briar pipe, and stared ominously at the south-west horizon: he might have distinguished signs of an impending cyclone in that expanse of bland and fleckless blue.

When Clotilde entered his gate, fifty feet from him, he was engaging in an attempt to light an empty pipe with a match that he had forgotten to scratch. However, he got himself enough in hand, by the time she stood before him, to scratch the match, suck the flame into his pipe-bowl, and discover that it was empty.

"Are you Mr. Henry Hooghtyling?" asked Clotilde; she had come slowly that last hundred yards, and yet she was flushed to the temples, breathless, peculiarly compressed about the eyes and about her faintly smiling mouth.

He had risen at her approach; he stood holding his pipe

in one hand and his red-and-blue paper of "Mechanic's Delight" smoking tobacco in the other. "That's who I am—most gin'ly," he admitted, clumsily pressing the tobacco against his coat-front so that he could get a thumb and finger into it. He was as calm, now, and as contemptuously amused by his recent perturbation as if he had expected a cyclone out of a clear sky. "Though some folks calls me 'Hen Hoot' for short."

Quite suddenly, as if it had been a thing determined on before and carried out according to program rather than demanded by the immediate circumstances, she held out her hand. "I'm *very* glad to meet you!" she said.

Henry, after taking plenty of time to put back into its paper the wad of long-cut he had gathered up, shook hands with her. "Set down, won't you?" he asked, backing away a little from the old rocker, returning finger and thumb to the paper of tobacco. "I guess you're ready to set, if you been walkin' up that old hill. That's a fair comfortable chair."

Clotilde protested: "Oh, I'll just sit on the edge of the porch—"

"They's plenty more chairs in the house, if I wanted one," said Henry; "but it's my idea to set right here on the edge of the porch, where my strong old pipe won't bother you—unless you're particular sensitive—"

"Oh, no; but I don't want to take—"

"Well, some ladies is, and I don't blame 'em." Henry sat down on the edge of the porch, tamping the old pipe with finger and thumb. "I never smoked much till I got so I wa'n't good for nawthin' else." Clotilde sat down in the rocker; her first tense-eyed appraisal of him had given place to a quiet survey, an air of generally

taking him in. "When a man ain't good for nawthin' else, I don't suppose smokin' does him any harm; still, if they's objections—ladies present—"'

Clotilde said: "Oh, a good many ladies smoke nowadays—cigarettes, you know." She said it as if expecting to deliver a shock.

"Oh, sure; and I've knowed 'em to smoke pipes, and cigars, too." Henry lit his pipe and puffed most unshockedly into space. "My grandmother used to smoke a pipe, when she got old; said it helped her asthmy. And there's Mrs. Johnson, she's Wallace Jones' housekeeper down on the Shady road, she likes her cigar as well as any man I ever see. But, o' course, the artusses round the village, both men and women, mostly sticks to cigarettes. Well, if a person ain't got a strong stummick, cigarettes ain't so apt to make 'em sick. Myself, I like cigars pretty good, though not's well's a pipe, but I never did care for cigarettes."

"But do you think it's *right* for women to smoke?" Clotilde asked, almost too plainly pumping him.

Henry looked judicial: not assertively judicial, but as one feeling the responsibility of delivering an opinion that might touch the personal beliefs of the person to whom he delivered it. "Well," he ruminated, "I always did think that a woman smokin' a cigar was goin' it a bit strong—a bit *straw-on*g." He smacked his thin lips over the savor of his pun. "Nor I can't say's I ever fancied the *looks* of a woman smokin' a pipe; but all the women I ever knew smoked pipes took to these here old cob pipes, and they was old women, and not much on looks, anyway. Myself, I always like a briar pipe."

He puffed his briar, a straight-stemmed, rubber-bitted,

black-burned relic of years of indulgence, and ruminated further.

" If women has got to smoke, they might better smoke cigarettes, wouldn't you say? " he resumed cautiously, and proceeded to hedge: " Not that I'm sayin' a woman has got any call to smoke—any more'n a man. Now Ethel—she's my wife, Ethel is, she ain't here now, she's just run up the road to my daughter's, but she ought to be back pretty soon:—but what I was goin' to say was that Ethel can't stand for a woman smokin' at all, no ways, under no circumstances. She'll listen to reason, she'll admit they's nawthin' downright agin' it, no more than they is agin' it for a man, but she just simply can't stand for it, and when a person, 'specially a woman, feels that way—why, you might as well quit. Myself, I can't say's I feel that way about it—not entirely."

As if he had come to a natural break, he sat silent, puffing, surveying the wide-descending expanse of country, waiting for a suggestion, or at least a sign, that further remarks would be agreeable. Or his waiting might have been interpreted as the politest of hints that his fancy had lightly turned to wood-cutting, that sufficient time had been given to introductory remarks, that he was ready for his visitor to explain why she had visited.

" I've been so interested in talking to you," said Clotilde, " that I've neglected to state my business."

" Business? " echoed Henry, showing surprise enough for politeness, interest enough to stimulate revealment. " Well, when a man's young, business had ought to come before pleasure, but when he gets old I don't know but what pleasure might's well come before business."

Having thus greased the ways so that business might be launched without shock or grating, he returned to leisurely contemplation of the landscape. From where she sat Clotilde had a good silhouette view of him, and she contemplated him with a fervor that put, for the moment, business and its well-greased ways out of her mind.

He was a sad-faced, shriveled man, of medium stature. The stray locks of hair that escaped from beneath his faded old green felt hat showed a mingling of reddish and white; his nose was thin, sharp, longish, with the hint of a Dutch dividing line at the tip; there was a Dutch hint, too, in the general flatness of his brown, lined, and weather-beaten face. His eyes were a faded gray, a little rheumy and reddish around the corners. A sagging grayish mustache, unevenly trimmed and longer at one end than the other, evidence of his poor eyesight and his habit of trimming it himself, curved downward almost to the level of his smooth-shaven, bluish chin. Between chin and the tieless collar of his black gingham shirt, his corded, loose-skinned neck suggested the wattles of the tired but hurried old turkey gobbler whose method of locomotion he imitated. Under the Anglicized name of "Houghteling" he had relatives in many parts of the United States, descendants of that same Piet Hooghtyling who had established a saw-mill a little further up that same valley, some lifetimes before. Henry still treasured, rather for use than for any pride of ancestry, a handsaw that had belonged to the first Hooghtyling over from Holland.

"When a man gets old and good for nawthin', it might just as well be pleasure first and business afterward," he

repeated, thinking of his neglected wood-pile. "Just as they say round here, 'If you would thrive, rise at five; but after you've thriven, you may rise at seven.' Just the same, a time comes when a man feels more like getting up at seven, or six anyway, than five, makes no difference whether he's thriven or not.—But don't notice me; I do a lot o' talkin'; I don't mean to put you out o' the way o' statin' your business; providin' you have less time to be sittin' round doin' nawthin' than I have."

Clotilde responded with pleasing promptness: "Well—the fact is, I wanted to know, Mr. Hooghtyling, whether you couldn't be persuaded to take me for a boarder?"

"Ah—ho—oh?" He raised his eyebrows, dropped his lower jaw, and faced her with insuppressible astonishment. At once he composed his features and looked away, but his very back radiated perturbation, surprise, considerations too numerous to mention.

Beginning at such inward questions as whether she was an "artuss" or a plain summer boarder, whether she had just arrived or hadn't liked the last place where she'd been staying, or—tremulous thought—had been forced to leave for some bad reason, why she was willing to consider a boarding place so far from the village, how much she might pay, whether Ethel would consider taking her, especially if it were discovered that she was an "artuss" and smoked cigarettes, how she had happened to come to his house, and who had recommended her to him, he arrived at last at a question polite enough to put into words:

"Walked up from the village?"

"Yes—it was a fine walk," admitted Clotilde, sur-

prised at the question because she had no inkling of the maze of questions out of which it had been chosen as most considerate.

"It's a pretty stiff walk," said Henry. "Takes my breath now—can't seem to git my wind comin' up that old hill. But the day was when I could go to the village'n back in less'n hour, and never know it."

He was silent again, busy with unraveling from his mass of tangled, and not altogether polite, considerations, another end that might, without offense, get him toward the solution of the great problems she had stirred up.

"Come in on the stage?" he asked casually, taking a fresh start, scowling at his own bald temerity, and yet bolstered up by a conviction that he must get at the heart of matters, cost what it might.

"Yes—the one-o'clock stage," said Clotilde. She had no idea of his drift; to her peculiarly frank and open mind he seemed merely to be maundering, old man's way, unable, after the manner of old farmers, to come to the point. She wondered why he didn't ask her something about herself: why, since she had applied for lodgings, he didn't show some interest in the matter.

Henry was much encouraged by his success; she had come by the stage, she had not left another boarding house either because she was hard to please or because she had, for some regrettable reason, been asked to leave. Both were important points. Carefully he planned his next advance.

"Woodbridge's a purty nice place—specially for artusses—not?" he asked. "Specially in the fall?"

That was really a very deep question, a masterpiece of a question, and he puffed his pipe and stared into vacancy

with much self-satisfaction after he had put it. Her answer to that, if she answered with anything like the fullness that any loquacious country person had every right to expect, would involve revelations as to how long she expected to stay, why she chose to enjoy Woodbridge's fall beauties from his lonely hillside rather than nearer the village, verily it gave her the best of openings to admit that she was an "artuss."

Clotilde answered, "Yes," and nothing more. He waited; he was disappointed. He passed his hand across his forehead, racking his brains to think of another opening. They were desperately hard to get anything out of, these city folks: tongue-tied, clammish, secretive. He scratched a match with unnecessary force and relit his pipe.

Clotilde, in a similar distress, sat frowning at him. She had answered his last question shortly because she wanted to make him understand that she wasn't interested, just then, in Woodbridge and its autumn prettinesses. She was interested in becoming his boarder, and it was downright callous of him to avoid the subject. How slow, stupid, secretive, tongue-tied, clammish these country people were! Even he, Henry Hooghtyling, who, a little while before, had given her solid food for admiration, he suffered from the customary country apathy of brain.

She plunged at the point: "Excuse me, Mr. Hooghtyling, but I'm so interested in getting you to take me as a boarder that I'd like to get that settled before we talk of other things. Now, please, do you mind if we just talk about that?"

"Why—ah—ho-oh!—o' course—I was just tryin' to

kinda lead—" Henry paused in mingled surprise and gratification too complicated for his shades of expression.

" Well, then, I'll just tell you something about myself," Clotilde hurried on, before he should have time to introduce another and wholly unrelated topic. " Don't you want to know something about me before you decide? "

In spite of his eagerness to know just that, Henry was cautious about admitting it; it seemed to imply doubt of a lady's desirability. " Well—now—" he hedged.

" Well, I'm an art-student, and I've visited Woodbridge from time to time," Clotilde resumed, not to be side-tracked. " I know a lot of the other artists, but I don't want to live down in the village because there's so much social life—one doesn't get a chance to work—or think. There's another good reason why I want to live up here, but we can discuss that later. I want, now, just to tell you what sort of a boarder you'll have. I'd need just a little room, with a north window—or, if that's inconvenient, maybe you could fix me up a place to paint in your barn. I'd expect just the kind of food you're accustomed to have—and I promise not to be any trouble. I'd want to stay for two months, anyway—till the middle of November. I'd want to pay you well, too, because I have plenty of money—more than I have any right to. Now, then, won't you please take me in? " She paused. " And, Oh, yes, my name's Clotilde Westbrook—at least Clotilde Westbrook—" She broke off again, more sharply this time, looking hard at Henry's agitated face. Henry had been absorbing intimate personal information faster than he had ever done in his life before; he was quite dazed by her graceless, mysterious frankness.

There was something almost horrible about her naked admission that she had more money than she had any right to. For a moment he looked both dazed and horrified.

Sudden color rushed up into Clotilde's cheeks in answer to his look. "Oh—I didn't think—you might know the name—my father—or—rather—" Her voice caught and tripped over the words, a somewhat cynical if startled light was in her eyes. "But, anyway, it's nothing to get stirred up about!" she added, with a quick change of air in favor of calmness, of slight amusement at them both, and waited for him to catch up with her.

Hooghtyling's natural Dutch stolidity descended like a curtain over his face. Stolidly he looked away across the wide valley, beginning to gather long shadows from the lowering sun. Beneath his stolidity, his mind was unusually busy; as was his custom with any important matter he didn't understand, he began to pick at the edges of it, to settle on what was apparent, and to call up analogies out of his own experience to explain the meaning of what was dark. In his philosophy he used both the inductive and deductive methods, and his hypotheses were valuable in proportion as his remembered experience with life had been broad and deep. Lacking a literary background, he relied on one of personalities and events.

"Name's don't count for much," he announced, after scarcely a full minute of intellectual co-ordination. "Once I knew the son of a man that was hanged for murder, and he was a fine boy, though he did keep mostly to himself." He looked at her with eyes that were speculative and friendly; plainly he offered the incident as a personal reassurance.

Her ways of thought were so much more stark and graceless than his own that it was some little time before she understood. When the plain import of his words came home to her, she was surprised and amused by his mistake rather than admiring of his penetration. She said: "Good Heavens, no—my father—Mr. Westbrook—didn't *murder* anybody!"

Henry, cut deep by her flat, frank, graceless reply, objected hastily: "Oh, sure not—sure not! I just thought they might a been—some little thing—you wantin' to git off by yourself—and mentionin' his name—I just thought me mentionin' a man who'd done a lot worse—" He relapsed into a distressed silence; as often happened, his power of expression was not equal to the fineness of his thought. Any real conversation with him was sure to be full of hints of feelings that broke through language and escaped.

She understood that she had hurt him, faintly understood even that there had been something rather fine about his attitude, ridiculous as his suspicion might have been, and set about soothing him. "I'd have you know Mr. Westbrook was a good man—almost too good a man," she said gently, if a little banteringly. "He was an Episcopal minister—and undoubtedly he's in Heaven at the present moment." Henry, without glancing at her, stolidly puffed his pipe; his attitude might have suggested that he felt small sympathy with levity at the expense of a dead father. Clotilde felt called upon to explain: "Excuse me if I speak lightly of him; he's been dead nearly fifteen years, and I hardly knew him even while he was alive; besides, with the very best of intentions, he did me a great injury—partly, no doubt, because

he was such a good man." There was considerable sharpness in this half-revelation. Henry gave no sign that he wasn't deaf. Stolid staring and pipe smoking obtained on one side, and slightly piqued waiting on the other, for a good two minutes.

"But we seem always to be getting off the point," protested Clotilde brightly, in an effort to stir up Dutch stolidity. "You haven't told me, yet, whether you'll take me as a boarder."

"O' course I'll have to talk it over with Ethel. We might let you have an answer inside two, three days." As if feeling the coolness of his announcement, he softened it with: "Myself, I won't put no objections in the way, and I think Ethel'll be willin'. Since the children all went, she ain't got much to do but keep house, do a few chores, make butter and preserves and such, and lay up a few stone walls."

If Clotilde was shocked by the coolness of this, or for any other reason, she kept her comments to herself. Henry seemed to feel a need to explain: "Of course, some folks might say it wasn't natural for a woman to lay stone, but Ethel, she's got the power to do it, and, myself, I always say a woman had ought to be let to do whatever she's able to do, if she wants to do it. Ethel says she'd rather lay stone walls as to bake bread, not but what she bakes good bread, too." He waited, testing the atmosphere. Clotilde preserved a silence that would have done credit to his own enigmatic Dutchiness. "'Tain't's if I ever *urged* her to lay stone," Henry apologized; "fact is, I used to kinda object—didn't seem natural, you know. But she could do it well's a man, better'n most, and I ain't said nothin' agin it for quite

some time. Just because she's a woman's no good reason she shouldn't lay stone walls if she's able to, and wants to."

His strengthening statements suggested a challenge. Clotilde said: "That's precisely what I think about it, Mr. Hooghtyling—and I wish more men had your good, sane view of the woman question." He smiled at that, looking at her with more warmth than he had displayed for some fifteen minutes. He was as pleased as an overgrown boy by any show of praise, Clotilde noticed, and began to understand the value of atmospheres in dealing with him. Her own natural frankness was the destruction of atmospheres; it came a little hard for her to draw dissembling shadows, mists, vague mellow auras around their relationship, but she saw that she would have to do it in order to get on with him.

"What a wonderful view you have from here!" she said, thinking less of the view than of a little judicious pleasantness.

He rose like a trout to proper bait. "Yes, wonderful! —and you ought to see it when the hills all takes on variegated colors." She wondered where he had got "variegated," and remembered that it was a favorite word of her mother's. Henry continued: "I always said, if a man could live by lookin', they wasn't no finer place in the valley. You get a better view from over there in that corner of the orchard." He pointed. "Might be you'd like to walk over and see it?"

"I'd love to!" Clotilde agreed, warmed by a feeling that, at last, they were getting on. He rose, and started off on his rapid, slouching saunter, without waiting for her. She recognized this as only a token of natural

diffidence that would have made another man wait for her to take precedence, and hurried up to his side. "I'm really in love with this place already," she said; "you see so much more than down in the valley. If you don't decide to take me, I'll be all broken up."

He looked sidewise at her, drawing back a little, wrinkling his far-sighted old eyes, so that he could see her more clearly, and all his face was reserved appreciation. "I shouldn't wonder but what Ethel'd be willin'," he said, and his announcement had the air of a bargain made and sealed.

Clotilde showed proper appreciation: "Oh, I'm glad you think she will!"

"But you gotta take into consideration," he hedged, "that it's sure some climb. Not but what I never noticed it when I was your age. I used to be a great man on the walk—I say it without boastin', no man around here could walk with me, and it's nawthin' but the truth."

Clotilde nodded appreciatively, edging toward his shoulder. He edged away in the opposite direction, because he couldn't see her well when she was close, and he seemed to have found a new and pleasant occupation in looking at her. There was a warmth, a peculiar and reserved warmth, in his regard: an interest, a real admiration, that was at once keen and impersonal.

He opened the crazy little picket gate to let her into the orchard, reminiscing garrulously: "Yes, I was sure some walker. I used to put in fourteen hours at the quarries, daylight to dark, and later if they was a moon—seems like men worked harder in them days than they do now—then, right after supper, I'd be off down to the village; maybe to a dance or somethin', or just to see a

girl. Three miles there, three miles back—it was naw-thin' to me. I could sleep most o' the way walkin' back—prob'lly you think that sounds—”

“I should think you'd *need* to sleep!” said Clotilde.

“Well, I could do it—just let my feet go like they was a team—seems like they'd turn out for people, though I wouldn't see 'em nor hear 'em when they called out to me—less'n, o' course, they hollered right loud. Then I'd wake up—some on 'em used to make fun o' me—sleepin' while I was walkin'! It don't sound natural, but they was weeks when that was 'bout all the sleep I'd get—walkin' up that old mountain road—wish I had a penny for ev'y time I've done it!

“Through the snow I used to hike it, too—many's the time I've gone up and down when the old road wasn't broke, and snow up to my middle. What a young man won't do! Them was the days when the first artusses got to comin' to the village. Seein' you kinda reminded me of 'em. They made quite some changes hereabouts, although in them days they didn't wear no such clothes as they do now. I mean the girls didn't. The men dress just about the same, although some of them has took to sprucin' up a good deal, too, in the last few years. In them days I used to dress 'bout as well as any on 'em, and they wasn't many could follow me long when they got me to take 'em huntin'. They used to be lots o' foxes and black bears into the mountains over beyond the village. I used to git up round midnight and give the artusses all the huntin' they wanted, and git back in time for half a day in the quarries.”

“I shouldn't think you could keep that sort of thing up very long,” said Clotilde.

"I didn't mind it—I et it alive! 'Twas only afterward, after I got married, it got me. Specially when the children was comin' on. Work from dark to dark in the quarries—no derricks in them days, either, all liftin' and rollin' by hand—and doin' the housework at home—Ethel was awful ailin', near died many a time durin' them days, for all she's so hearty now—walkin' for the doctor to the village—weren't no telephones round here then—and havin' no heart for walkin' like I'd used to have. A man can do anything long's he's got a heart for it. Goin' it like that for near eight years—the children was always ailin', too, well as Ethel, we lost three on 'em, not countin' Clarence, still-born—well, it broke me down, I got a cold settled on my lungs, and the doctor, he said my heart was bad, too, said I couldn't never do no more hard work, but I kep' it up till I near died, and I ain't been good for nawthin' since.

"Seein' you come up the road," apologized Henry, "got me started on all this. In them days, before I got married, seems like the artusses used to walk the roads more'n they do now, anyway the women did. I remember sittin' of a Sunday mornin' on the old porch back there and watchin' 'em go by. Them was the days when I was fresh as a cucumber picked in the mornin'."

They came to the far corner of the orchard and stopped to look at the view.

## CHAPTER III

### SOME MOUNTAINS, A VALLEY, A VILLAGE, A VIEW, AND A VERY FLAT ANNOUNCEMENT

WHOEVER has taken a voyage up the Hudson must remember the Kaatskill Mountains. They are a dismembered branch of the great Appalachian family, and are seen away to the west of the river, swelling up to a noble height, and lording it over the surrounding country. Every change of season, every change of weather, indeed, every hour of day produces some change in the magical hues and shapes of these mountains; and they are regarded by all the good wives, far and near, as perfect barometers. When the weather is settled, they are clothed in blue and purple, and print their bold outlines on the clear evening sky; but, sometimes, when the rest of the landscape is cloudless, they will gather a hood of gray vapors around their summits, which, in the last rays of the setting sun, will glow and light up like a crown of glory.

(These rich words are none of mine, but Washington Irving's, *scriptor Americanus, abnormis sapiens*; they are put in here because they are so good, because they are so pat, and because, forming as they do a part of one of the greatest American classics, they are not likely to lack novelty. They flow on:)

At the foot of these fairy mountains the voyager may have descried the light smoke curling up from a village,

whose shingle roofs gleam among the trees, just where the blue tints of the upland melt into the fresh green of the nearer landscape. It is a little village of great antiquity, having been founded by the Dutch colonists, in the early days of the province, just about the beginning of the government of the good Peter Stuyvesant, (may he rest in peace!)

· And here we must let Irving, also, rest in peace: even though we may pray that, from time to time, somewhat of his spirit may be manifest among us; for the Dutch houses he proceeds to mention have long since gone down into the dust and ashes of a larger antiquity. Nor does he refer to the Skuyterkill, surely an important feature of the village of Woodbridge, whose present aspects he has thus far located and described.

Perhaps the Skuyterkill is not so important in itself, even though it is a prettier little stream than its significance of "Squatters' Creek" might indicate, as in its effects. In an antiquity sufficient to modernize even Irving's Dutch houses, it had much to do with modeling the fine valley, most spacious of Catskill valleys, that now bears its name. Between The Slide and Teyce Ten Eyck Mountain, which terminate the ridges on either side of its eastward debouchment toward the Hudson, there is a two-by-ten-mile sweep of rolling, variegated country, not so bad as much of our eastern lands for farming, and superlative in its response to the changing lights of morning and evening, to the changing vestures of spring, summer, autumn, and winter.

It is not a valley to tempt eagle-spirits; there is little of the obtrusively grand and awesome about it; but for

friendliness, expansiveness, quiet beauty and a certain rough eccentricity approaching downright humor, it has received the homage of a few choice souls. Nor does its lack of obtrusive grandeur and awesomeness indicate any pettiness in its make-up: rather, as among human characteristics of any real depths, the reverse. Especially when evening slants across the summits and the long sky-roofed corridors to westward, it seems to include all the space in the world, and in the unplumbed universe beyond. Its mountains neither make sterile the earth, nor shut out the sky.

Woodbridge on the Skuyterkill, Slide Mountain and Teyce Ten Eyck—the names in juxtaposition suggest the basic Dutch-English stock of the inhabitants. But if the stock is basically Dutch-English, time and chance have made the present branches more heterogeneous of nationality and social strata than is the case with most other similar communities of our heterogeneous America. No more than America itself has it proved a melting pot; it has received strains and meanings from the ends of the earth, and of time, not to fuse them into a hard uniformity, but to develop the most viable of their differences, keeping them distinct, fluid, chemically combinable, capable of life-giving reactions and surprises, an earnest of the absurdity of some erudite fears for the world-state that is to be.

Some three decades since, a certain rich man founded a Ruskin-esque art and handicrafts colony on the northward side of the valley, westward of the summit of Teyce Ten Eyck some two miles, and some three miles from the old village. A few years later came the summer school of a New York academy of painting. From these be-

ginnings, the community has added to its year-round population numerous unattached artists, writers, retired business men, peripatetic philosophers, and general intellectual vagrants, thrown off from the maelstrom of New York City, for the most part, and more congenial to the easy-going ways of Woodbridge than to the somewhat constricting activities of our new Hub of the Universe. Without minimizing the importance of hubs, Woodbridge enjoyed its peripheral position as offering it freedom from much purely mechanical wear and tear, as well as affording a larger view of the universe. If New York moved the universe, it had its reward; and Woodbridge felt anything but compunction for sitting, in the nature of a philosophical fly, on a spoke of its wheel.

It was both fortunate in its position, and jealous of its fortune; since the village lay some four miles from the nearest railway station, and a slightly greater distance from the nearest Hudson River landing, it had escaped that devastating summer invasion whose signs are merry-go-rounds, dance-halls, booze-pagodas and synagogues in the remoter Catskill cities, and even its half-dozen farmer-boarding-house-keepers were a unit with the rest of the community in desiring to make its escape permanent. Throughout its various social strata it had a sort of snobbery, neither financial nor social, but intellectual and democratic, that had proved a barrier rather than an attraction to undesirables.

For ten miles along either side of the Skuyterkill Valley, and over the ridges between, the substantial white farmhouses of the older generation were neighborly with the fanciful dwellings of newer arrivals, from sumptuous country mansion to bark hut, with wide-roofed brown

bungalows in the majority. The village itself centered around a baker's dozen of square, pyramid-roofed, obviously modern houses; four or five older houses with gable roofs; two little white churches with spires reminiscent of Sir Christopher Wren; a restaurant-and-bakery; two general stores; a combined stationery and candy store, barber-shop and auto supply station; a square white box of a new post-office; and a long, roomy, wooden "Inn," that was passing prosperous until the town went "dry." In the village, and indeed throughout the country at large, the native Woodbridgians had things very much their own way; if urban wealth and intellect had come in, urban wealth and intellect had had the intelligence, after a few brief and abortive attempts, to leave matters in the hands of the native majority. There were no lock-pulling *volk* and no Pruss-like over-lords as at Garrison, a few miles down the river.

The natives had profited and improved along with the immigrants. It is true that a social investigator, or a sentimental lady novelist, would have had no difficulty in finding proofs of native degeneration. But, if some went down, others went up; the town idiot was at least counterbalanced by town brains, and if native brain and pluck went elsewhere it was not lost. Even a most pessimistic and gifted lady novelist, tragedy-bent, would have had to pick her material with care in order to prove the degeneracy of the eastern hill districts on the basis of Woodbridge. Mulched with decay, after nature's general provision, it undoubtedly was, but there was a good deal more to it, as there may well be to most communities, than the mulch.

Part of all this Clotilde looked down on, and guessed

at, from the southwest corner of Henry Hooghtyling's farm, half-way up Teyce Ten Eyck Mountain. Five-o'clock sunlight slanted down the valley, making the trees and meadows glisten, picking out the roofs of scattered bungalows and the more distant village buildings. She commented :

" It's a wonderfully mixed-up place, isn't it? Old and new, ultra-modern—and coming out today I saw a team of oxen hauling wood along the new state road. How white those two church-spires are—and that big gray roof between them is the roof of the art students' dormitory, isn't it? "

" That's where they sleep, but they mostly takes their meals at boardin' houses and the new restaurant," Henry elucidated, looking it all over with quiet appreciation and a kind of ownership. He added : " They's almost more stoodlums than farmhouses now; used to be I could look down from here and not see a single stoodlum."

" Stoodlum? " repeated Clotilde.

" The places where the artusses live and paint pictures—though, of course, their real names is stood-yohs."

They were both silent for a little while, for perhaps two minutes, during which Clotilde's attention drifted away from the view, in which she had never been more than half interested, and became centered on the stolid, sad-faced, broken, but philosophical man beside her. She stared at him hard, turning away from moment to moment to look keenly outward, in a way that had nothing to do with the view. Her clear brown eyes yearned over him a little, pitied, doubted, speculated; at moments, in spite of her girlishness, there was something motherly-tender in her face.

"Mr. Hooghtyling," she began, with sudden determination that swept from her everything but a clear, cool frankness, "I believe in being perfectly plain and straightforward about everything—don't you?"

Her voice, belying an increasing tension about her eyes and mouth, was as calm, as matter-of-fact, almost as indifferent as if she had been contemplating a question of afternoon tea.

"Why, sure," admitted Henry, absently, mendaciously, considering, through eyes like binoculars, how like a scurrying black bug was an automobile on the white state road, three miles away.

"Truth, just plain Truth, is the greatest thing in the world," mentioned Clotilde in a way that inevitably suggested Truth's relationship with a cold pancake.

And yet she was deeply stirred; she had that vital interest in matter which alternating generations bestow on manner, and naked, abstract Truth was more to her than all the seven veils of Truth's customary adornment. In the midst of a world cozily pantheistic, fetishistic, frankly euphemistic and idolatrous, she stood with a little group of the new generation, mostly young women, who had attained, often together, sometimes singly, to a stern monotheism of idea. If youth is a revel, especially youth among the leisure and semi-leisure classes, perhaps its least harmful tipple is new ideas; whatever their brand, they may uplift oftener than they blight. Uplifted, clear, cool, and calm were Clotilde's wide eyes, straight and stimulated was her slender figure, as she stood beside the moss-grown human relic beside her and announced, like an aroused Vestal, the greatness of her idea of Truth.

Henry Hooghtyling had had no experience with Truth

capitalized, but only with a considerable spawn of small truths. "Leastwise," he commented, not much interested in this high, alien subject, "George Washington would agree with you."

Declared Clotilde, with slight irritation for the lowness of his view: "If people would only be absolutely truthful with each other, all the troubles in the world would vanish like mists before the sun—at least all the real troubles would."

"Uh-huh—ye-es." Henry admitted, with politeness but no great show of conviction, the plausibility of this First Article in the creed of Modernism. "Once I heard of a man started out to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothin' but the truth—"

"Oh, yes—and he found himself in hot water right away, too, didn't he?" Clotilde interrupted, with gentleness of voice, and yet great firmness too. "Nothing is easier to make ridiculous than the great and important facts of life." She was as calmly sure of herself as a young priestess giving forth her first revelation. "Truth is not only beauty—it is goodness, too,—that is all we know on earth, and all we need to know. Why, if only two or three men had told each other the truth, and their peoples the truth, or anything like the truth, this whole miserable European War need never have started. People must be true to the truth, frank, ready to call things by their real names—"

"I never heard that." Henry slipped in the remark with caution, and aroused interest. "Around here they say it was mostly because the big-mouthed bluffer of a German Kaiser—"

Clotilde tried to move on toward her appointed ends:

"And, because I believe in the truth, in perfect frankness—"

"Him and his spies," continued Henry, reposefully finding personalities to chew on in the midst of this much thin air. "Why, I hear they was a German spy caught just the other day, over in Delaware County. He came into a farmhouse and asked to stay over-night, and when the woman went out, the children saw him put somethin' into the beans. She had a mess o' beans on the stove, cookin' them for supper. The children was just old enough to notice, and when they told the woman the man'd put somethin' in the beans, she never said nothin', but waited till her husband come, and told him, and her husband said, 'All right—let's sit down to supper.' And gave the German spy a plate o' beans, and said: 'Eat those, and see how you like 'em—specially the flavorin';' and when the German spy said he never et beans, but couldn't he have somethin' else, the farmer went and got his revolver, and stuck it against the spy's head, and said: 'Now you eat those beans, all on 'em, or git your brains blowed out.' And the spy et 'em—and they killed him. He died right away, quick—yes, sir!"

"Now, I dunno what a German spy'd want with tryin' to poison a country family," hedged Henry, while Clotilde looked on in sufficient astonishment to make her forget, for the moment, her previously appointed ends; "but that's what they say—and I got it pretty straight, too."

"Of all the nonsense—of all the impossible tales—as you say, why on earth should any German spy want to poison a country family?" Clotilde was radiantly indignant. Henry repeated her indignation in a fainter form

by scowling and nodding his head. "That's what I say—but they *has* been German spies in this country—or would you it was all nothin' but sich poddle-dock as that?"

"It has been much exaggerated—just like the wild yarn you've just told me," Clotilde decreed; "and I'm glad to see you don't believe it.—But, I was about,—I wanted to tell you—when you got started on that absurd spy story—"

Henry apologized: "I just happened to think of it—"

"I was going to tell you, speaking of truth and frankness and—and perfect frankness between people, you know—" She seemed to have some difficulty in getting back into the swing of her revelation; Henry deferentially, though with a vacantness of face that suggested continued mulling over the German spy question, waited for her. "I wanted to say that, because I do believe so strongly in plain dealing, as well as because I don't want any misunderstanding to cloud the beginning of our acquaintance—for these good reasons, I want to tell you, now, that I'm your daughter. I'm sorry I didn't mention it before. I intended to tell you within five minutes, at most, after I'd met you, but, somehow, we got to talking of other things."

It was all magnificently flat, bald, improbable, fishy, in spite of, or because of, its herald's calm and flat conviction. Henry glanced quickly at her, raised his straggling reddish left eyebrow a quarter of an inch, puffed his pipe, and glanced, with one faintly interested blink, away. After a little further absorption of the gist of her statement, he was sufficiently impressed to remove his pipe from his mouth and glance at her again. Both

his eyebrows were raised, at least a half-inch each, this time; he blinked rapidly three times, scowling crescendo. It would have taken him at least a year, of ten hours' solid conversational manœuvring a day, to reach a flat statement of that consequence, and yet he was coming on.

Clotilde met his surprise quietly, unflinchingly, a priestess floating on the knowledge that naked Truth was at her side, that the very stars in their courses stood ready to vindicate her. "As I said before, when I thought you guessed," she told him evenly, beginning to show a slight flush of excitement nevertheless, "it's nothing whatever to get excited about. I'm glad of it—and I hope you are."

Henry developed, slowly, but with the thoroughness in detail and general effect of a well-handled negative. Within half a minute he was displaying the round-eyed, drop-jawed effect that was his common reaction to a matter at once dubious and astounding. He did not really drop his jaw; rather he tilted his head backward while keeping his lower jaw stationary, thus giving his gesture a greater dignity and reticence than if he had merely opened his mouth by dropping his jaw. "Ah—ho-oh?" he commented blankly. His wide gray eyes began to narrow and pucker with the rapidity of his search of inward backgrounds, possibilities, entailments. Quite suddenly his mouth went shut, his eyes became slits, his face hardened and whitened; with the deliberate effectiveness of a threatened box-turtle he retired into his shell. "Huh!" he breathed sharply; it was like the quick gasp produced by a retiring turtle when it expresses the air from its lungs to make room for all its withdrawning members inside its shell.

"It's nothing to get excited about—absolutely nothing!" insisted Clotilde, quite tremulous with excitement. "Why, I'm prouder of my new ancestry than I ever was of being a Westbrook. You see, I've looked you—I've looked *us* up! We're related to the Houghtelings, one of the finest families in America—and we're the main branch, too,—not that ancestry counts for much—but I just want to make you glad—make you understand that I'm really *glad*—to have found out!" Her voice, in spite of its ring of excitement, tried to be soothing, reassuring, quite as if he had been a terrified box-turtle shutting himself up, with some painfulness, against a gentle lady who was far readier to feed and pet him than to do him any harm. "Please don't look so cut up!" she protested. In spite of the shell of super-Dutch stolidity into which he had retired, Henry might have been accused of looking cut up. "I just think we ought to face facts—and accept them for facts, you know. I'm ready to be perfectly frank and open about this whole matter—not that there's anything about it that either of us, that anybody with a trace of modern intelligence, need be the faintest little bit ashamed of. Just as soon as I can, tomorrow if you're willing, I want to take you down and introduce you to all my friends in Woodbridge as my father."

In his youth, Henry had indulged in that youthful bucolic pastime of putting a coal of fire on a box-turtle's back to make it come out of its shell; and not only to make it come out of its shell, but to show signs of great animation besides. If he hadn't been so much taken up with more important considerations, the effect of this offer on him might have reminded him of lively moments

in his past. "Oh, now—please—no!" he stuttered, waving his right hand like a flapper at the level of his face, craning his turtle-like neck, bobbing his sharp-faced, thin-lipped, not un-turtle-like head. "Wait—don't start nawthin'—"

"Well, of course if you don't feel—" hesitated Clotilde, not above emotions of pity even while exhilarated by much pure Truth.

With the coal of fire removed, or at least lessened in warmth, Henry became calmer, even to the extent of retiring part way into his shell again. He turned away from her, and stood leaning against a fence-post, staring with all his rheumy-eyed might at nothing at all. Clotilde pitied him, and yet the Truth was the Truth. He had no right to take it so hard; to her mind, and she had examined the matter in the light of all the large and brilliant basic Modernistic beliefs she possessed, it was nothing that a person ought to get excited about, or be much ashamed of. She protested, with distressed disappointment. "Really, I didn't expect you to take it like this. I thought I'd just explain and that you might even be pleased—to know that I'm your daughter: just as I am pleased, deeply pleased, to know that you're my father."

She waited. Henry objected, feebly embracing his fence-post: "I can't hardly swaller it. I don't know 'bout such things. It might be all just a mistake."

"Oh, as for that, it's perfectly true," testified Clotilde, tolerant of his disbelief, and yet with the clear certainty of an eye-witness to the whole matter in dispute. "And it's only when we refuse to accept a truth, that it hurts us." This abstraction was so far removed from Henry's immediate and very concrete interests that he continued

to sag, in a weak, disorderly way, against his fence-post, silently picking out the salient points in his disordered universe. Brightly, as if she accepted his silence as presaging a return of reason, Clotilde proceeded: "Come, now, is it so terrible that you've been introduced to a daughter you didn't know you had?"

Henry admitted, with deep feeling: "It's a kind of a shock to a man—and my heart ain't real straw-ong."

"But it *oughtn't* to be such a shock—and, anyway, not a sad shock—like a death in the family, or something. I confess, I was so egotistical as to hope you might be—well—just a little bit proud of me! Don't you think I'd make you a pretty good daughter?"

"Tain't that—exactly."

"Well, then—why can't we accept each other, openly, as father and daughter?"

He shuddered. "A man's got to take a lot o' things into consideration."

"Well, what—for instance?"

"Oh—a lot." He seemed half-paralyzed by the multitude.

"Name me just one!"

He ventured, "Well—there's Ethel." This external wracking, combined with his internal inquisition, left him fearful, half-voiceless, distraught.

Clotilde received an unexpected shock. Ethel was a consideration. Did Ethel abuse that weak, fearful old man? she wondered. Ethel was accustomed to lay up stone walls, anyway, which argued abilities.

"But she, also, ought to be glad." Clotilde gained inspiration by facing this difficulty, by turning the pure light of Modernistic truth upon it. "Why shouldn't she

be glad? Let's just look at it as a Fact, without all the foolish superstitions many people have about such things. Let's look at it calmly—fully—at its actual essence. Is there anything about it that everybody oughtn't to be glad of—*now?* Why, I consider myself a pretty good excuse for it, if it needs any! I wouldn't have been alive, myself, if it hadn't happened—I would have been worse than dead! For, of course, it's a thousand times better to have lived and died than never to have lived at all. Can't you be a little glad of it—as I am?"

Neither by word nor look did Henry suggest gladness. Clotilde laughed at him, and yet there was vexation in her laugh. "You're all overcome by old superstitions, sickly old lying morals and maxims that won't bear sunlight!" she rallied him, picking words readily out of her wide literary background under the stimulus of a real enthusiasm for her subject. "Why, there's some good in nearly everything—yesterday's bad is often enough today's good, you know. And, look back on what may have been bad, or had some bad mixed up in it—wasn't there something beautiful and good and true in it, too? Was it altogether low, vile, what happened twenty-five years ago this coming October—one October night when the moon was high—and there was Indian summer—Indian summer, with its sweetness like a richer spring in the air?—Please don't shudder—it's all so long past—and wasn't there anything more than things to be shuddered at in it, anyway? Remember the little lonely brown bungalow, all shut in by darkness and moonlight and the singing pines, with the Skuyterkill babbling along over its pebbles just below the back door—remember how

you found an old stone pitcher, and dipped up water from the brook—for *her*—my poor mother—who paid, and more than paid—”

Old Hooghtyling trembled so violently that he gripped his fence-post with both hands for support; she did not notice, for she had ceased to look at him. She was looking out over the darkening valley, inspired, devotional, glorying in an old, and true, and very bitter-sweet romance. She said, almost chanting:

“ Poor, foolish girl—poor boy! How inevitable it was that he should fall desperately in love with the pretty girl artist—who was enough in love with him to lure him on, like the nasty little mid-Victorian pussy cat she was, and couldn’t well help being, because men, and society, and even her foolish mother were determined she should be just that—how inevitable that she should play with him, flirt with him, tease him despicably—and feel rather amused than sorry for him when he confessed to her that he couldn’t sleep at night for thinking of her, nor think of anything else by day!”

Hooghtyling’s corded brown hands, fastened on the fence-post, quivered, contracted, turned bluish at the knuckles; his head drooped in a slow palsy toward his breast.

Clotilde did not see him; her mind, her backward-turned eyes, were full of the idyl of a vanished boy and girl, of the truth and poetry about them, of poetry that inspired her because it was true, and a part of the blood in her veins. Her inward rhapsody swelled into words: “ Oh, it was in some way just and right that he should be carried away, and carry her away with him—there in the old pine woods—that he should sweep away

all the little lies and trickeries of her—lies and trickeries that made it the more inevitable that she should yield because she didn't half-understand how much she wanted and needed to yield! And there is something of poetic justice, too, that the country should, for once, have turned the tables on the city—that what is forever happening between country girl and city boy should have happened between city girl and country boy—surely he had a hundred times greater provocation than any predacious young male from the city ever had! Yes, there was truth and justice in it—and now, now that it's all so dead and gone—now that the wrong, if it was wrong, has been paid for a hundred times over—I'm *glad*—glad to thank the Spirit of the Universe—" Tears were in her upturned eyes, orange-tinted, level sunlight from the west played over her white, transfigured face. "Oh, I'm *glad* to thank Him, that, in that outburst of His power, His truth, His justice, my being and my soul began!"

Her voice broke into a sharp little sob; overfilled with recreated emotion, made the more susceptible to it by what of that long-past little drama still lingered in her veins and nerves, she turned away her head, stifled several succeeding sobs, got out the little blue-edged pocket handkerchief and pressed it against her eyes. She had almost forgotten old Hooghtyling's presence; she had not looked at him for some minutes. "There, I'm a poor fool to lose my self-possession like that!" she choked, in apology to herself rather than to him; "but it *does* mean such a lot to me! I never began to understand myself until I knew!—And I think it was the final perfect touch that you never saw each other again, that you never even heard of each other again, after that night."

This last was addressed solely to Hooghtyling, and she turned toward him as she spoke.

She made out, mistily because of the mist still in her eyes, that he was not where he had been when she had seen him last. He was lying, with blood on one upturned cheek, crumpled down against the fence-post to which he had been holding.

With instantaneous efficiency she was at his side, had loosened his collar and shirt-front, pushed her hand down over the serrated leathern clamminess of his breast. He had only fainted, she decided; and one of the barbs of the barbed-wire fence must have cut his cheek as he sank to the ground. She remembered that he had said he had a weak heart, and, while she chafed his temples and wrists, roundly cursed her thoughtlessness. Cursing had been one of her extra-curricular courses at Vassar; under great provocation, she performed as efficiently as any young gentleman—or as most Modernistic, and some antique, young ladies.

## CHAPTER IV

### DURING WHICH SEVERAL CONFIDENCES ARE PLACED IN AN APPRECIATIVE CORNER

TOWARD eight o'clock that evening, by way of a walk to the Brooks' farmhouse where there was a telephone, and a ride in a buggy driven by an adoring "Skeeter" whom she scarcely noticed, Clotilde reached the front door of the cleverest Woodbridgian gossip, and knocked.

The clever one herself opened the door, and stood revealed in the misty glow of red-hooded candles behind her.

"Hello, Edna," said Clotilde.

"Well—the saints preserve us! How on earth—at this hour? Why, we weren't expecting—" They kissed affectionately. "—you for a week at least! You don't know how I've been hungering for you. Things have been unconscionably slow—and nerve-wracking. Come right in—and tell me all the Greenwich Village scandal immediately!" Edna led the way into the big beam-ceilinged, wood-ceiled living-room of the bungalow, turned about, and surveyed her guest as if expecting to gather the first morsels of scandal merely by looking.

"First, something to eat, if you *please*; I haven't had a bite since lunch on the train at eleven o'clock; say, that's a spiffy house-dress you have on," said Clotilde.

"For the love of Mike! Come right into the kitchen!

—Yes, it is rather a dear, isn't it?" Edna, already lightly on her way to the rear of the living-room, patted the silken trousers of her costume as she walked. It was a Chinese suit, red and blue embroidered in yellow, showing six inches of yellow silk stocking between the ends of the flappy trousers and the black Chinese pumps. "It makes a perfectly corking house-dress." They entered the kitchen. "There, sit down, you poor kid." Edna pushed forward a wooden kitchen chair that differed from thousands of its relatives only in being painted a brilliant magenta, and scurried over to her refrigerator. "Anchovies—grape jelly—Camembert—half an artichoke," she inventoried rapidly. "It's beastly hard to get supplies up here—and beastlier since the beastly war invaded us! But, say, there's a bit of left-over steak—I could warm it in just a minute—"

Clotilde demanded: "Steak, please! Just as it is—and bread and butter—thick slices! I tell you, I'm famished! I've spent the most—yes, quite the most stimulating afternoon of my life—on an empty stomach. I'll tell you all about it, but not a word till I taste food! So hurry!"

Chirping surprise, clucking and chortling anticipated joy, Edna hurried. She was a deft little person: as geniuses often are, she was almost petite. The wonder constantly grew that one small head could carry not only all she knew, but all she suspected, besides. Capably she sliced bread, deftly she hurried it, with a mound of butter on one side of the plate, and the portion of cold beef-steak on another, to the aluminum-topped kitchen table that faced Clotilde.

"What on earth have you been up to?" she demanded,

tripping over to the refrigerator in quest of anchovies, jelly, the artichoke and the cheese.

Clotilde announced, with some portentousness in spite of a muffled voice: "I've spent the afternoon, Edna, in getting acquainted with my father."

Edna's reaction was sufficiently violent and sudden to prove the plain truth potent in some quarters, at least. "God save us—*Clo-tilde*—don't tell me you've turned *Spiritualist!*"

"Don't be foolish."

"Well, you know, dear, that you've turned such a lot of things, from time to time, or at least been interested in them." Edna competently served the remaining edibles and sat down in a delicate azure counterpart of Clotilde's chair. "Vibrationist, New Thought-ist, Socialist, Anarchist, Christian Scientist—"

"Oh, cut it! I'm serious. You know I merely looked into those—"

"Theosophist, Fletcherist, Freudist, Psycho-analyst, Behaviorist, Modernist," Edna continued imperturbably, well knowing that Truth comes more piquantly from a bottle kept corked a little while. "In your investigations, what more natural than that you should have happened upon *Spiritualist*? Such a lot of Modernistic-ists you've delved into, my dear—"

"But, I'm serious, Edna," protested Clotilde, showing precisely the proper reaction to suppression. "You skeptic! I tell you my father—"

"Yes, life has made me a skeptic—and you've helped." Edna handled the cork with practised fingers; Clotilde's need for expression was becoming so large that she had difficulty in eating. "Don't I remember how cleverly

you put it over, for two whole months, that summer down at Lime, that you were a Jewess? And that wasn't half as improbable—”

“ But I had a serious reason—you know I did, dear!” protested Clotilde. “ They were all so down on the Hebrews—”

“ And all so up and after you!”

“ Well, I made a good many of them change their ideas about Hebrews—or at least about Hebrewesses, didn't I? I only went into that stunt to serve the *truth*, Edna; I was not a bit more clever and attractive than a lot of Hebrew girls I know, and I wanted to show—”

“ But this about your father is too preposterous!” insisted Edna, herding Clotilde skilfully back into nearer and more surprising fields. “ You'll have to work harder to support that than you ever did to get up a Jewish ancestry! ”

“ I shan't have to work at all!” Clotilde absorbed excellent imported cheese, at war prices, with as much appreciation as if she'd been eating crusts. “ I wish you didn't know about the Lime stunt—you never appreciated my motives, anyway. But motives are nothing to you. However, *this time*—”

“ Yes, dear?”

“ Oh, I wouldn't bother with telling you if I didn't need you the worst way to help me! You're a cat, Edna, a perfect cat!—But I can convince you! The fact is, the Reverend Percy Westbrook wasn't my real father; my real father's name is Hooghtyling, he lives on the mountain back there; he's a farmer, a plain, country farmer, with horrible finger-nails—and teeth—and underwear. Not that I'm not prouder of him than I

ever was of my supposed father—for he's got *brains*, Edna—in some ways, he has an almost Modern intelligence! I've just spent the afternoon with him—so there!"

"Good Heavens! Does he *admit* it?" For a moment the cleverest Woodbridgian gossip's gray-green eyes widened with something approaching belief, with a true gossip's joy in gossipful discovery.

Clotilde explained truthfully, lamely: "Well, not in so many words—but—"

"I see." Edna was herself again. "And it goes to show, your being his daughter does, that there's nothing in all this bunco about ancestry—that you, daughter of a plain country farmer, are just as clever and attractive as if you were a blue-blooded Westbrook—all most Modernistic and Truthful—doesn't it?"

It was a retort well supplied with barbs, but there was no sting in Edna's voice. Clotilde, eating bread and jelly, nodded with vigor. "It does. As I told you, I'm proud of it. I know where I get my brains, now,—my independence—for there *is* something in heredity, as well as in environment. I intend that everybody shall recognize him as my father. I came to tell you at once, because I knew, if I did, everybody in Woodbridge would know of it tomorrow. There—take that!"

"I do—I'm proud to deserve it.—Well, I helped you at Lime, and I'll help you now. It will help to take my mind off this beastly war, if nothing else. By tomorrow night, Woodbridge will have a sensation large enough to turn Lime, Conn., green with envy. But, say, we'll have to lay some wires! Will old farmer—what's his name?—stand for it? You seemed a bit doubtful.

Maybe we'd better get one of the boys to go up and fix father? There are plenty of old rubes around here who'll do if he hangs back. We might give a party, and introduce him! I begin to see possibilities!—But, say, dear—wait—another thought—your mother—this is worse than making her a daughter of David! Good Lord! Have you paused to reflect that your mother might be interested in all this?"

Clotilde had endured with the patience of a tormented saint. "Edna, I see—"

"Wait! I have it! A rube couple—not a rube father solus—who might cast reflections on somebody! That's it—and it will go beautifully!" Edna hopped up from her chair; ten years seemed to fall from her, leaving her almost girlish. "Do you get me? You're the daughter of an old rube couple, adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Westbrook when an infant—poverty forced 'em to part with you—reunion, tears,—say, we'll hire the League Studio, and give a party that will shake the old town from its teeth to its toe-nails! Clotie, angel, I said—I said just as soon as I heard you were coming up, that you'd start something! Come to my arms, beloved—come at least into the living-room, and let's fix up this thing so it'll explode with a proper bang!"

Clotilde, more saint-like of face, silently followed back into the big living-room where hooded candles in sconces on the dark walls combined with the few embers in the huge stone fireplace to make a cozy pinkish deception of light.

"Take that comfy chair, dear," urged the elder woman, motioning Clotilde into the depths of a big Bar Harbor rocker before the fire. "You look tired, and

you walk tired. Which is worse. Maybe we'd better let this riot go over till tomorrow and just rest. We wouldn't have time for much discussion, anyway—not more than half an hour. We're going to have a little party this evening—the Talbots, Helen Hope, and Carey Beemis. Arthur is out, now, collecting them in the car."

Clotilde said, a bit too casually: "I hope friend husband is well—and painting many good landscapes?"

"He's been doing darned little lately." Mrs. Arthur, moved by Clotilde's tone, glanced at her across the intervening gloom. "Dear, if you don't feel up to even a quiet little party—if you'd rather just turn in—"

"It wasn't that." Clotilde looked patiently at the fire. "I was just getting up the energy to convince you that it's perfectly true what I've told you about my father. It means a good deal to me."

The little woman was moved, and perplexed. Highly spiced human nature, human nature made tricky, devious, by the pressure of conventions upon dubious events, had been her main interest for so long that Clotilde's infantile simplicity baffled her. Little dramas in which diverse little truths were forced, by propriety and their own stealthy natures, to wear their seven times seven veils with an air—from these Mrs. Arthur Kling could pick out dominant and subordinate *motifs*, plot and counterplot, hero, heroine, ingénue, juvenile, and heavy. Any truth more or less bald, naked, and unashamed harmonized neither with her ideas of life, nor of art.

She peered at Clotilde, narrowing her eyes against the concealments of the low concealing lights that she affected both in her house and in her mind.

"Really, Clo'—" It was a clipped protest.

"I think it was rather fine of my mother to tell me," said Clotilde, looking at the fire, so wrapped up in her own affairs that she didn't catch the protest. "She's changed a good deal—especially since Mr. Westbrook's death. I think one might almost call her Modern—or as Modern as any woman who was brought up as she was, and fell into the clutches of the Reverend Percy Westbrook, under the circumstances—you know he was her rector, and she thought of him first when she found herself in trouble—or at least she considered it trouble—when she found, I mean, of course, that I—had happened."

*"For—the—everlasting—love—of—Mike!"*

"Why, what's the matter?"

"I'm just discovering that I've been a darned fool again, and it always shocks me. Go on, dear."

Clotilde went on, with a faint little smile of triumph: "You didn't believe me, did you? And yet I thought you would—right away. Surely my case isn't any different from hundreds of others you've heard of?"

"No, it isn't; but *you* are, dear—you're rather different from anyone I ever heard of! Perhaps that's because I'm not, after all, very Modern."

"Why, I thought you were!"

"I think so, too—periodically. But you know my definition of a Modern woman? A woman whom nothing can shock is Modern! I admit I'm still subject to shocks. Then—your mother told you?"

"Yes; very simply, frankly, and very—very beautifully. She said she'd often wanted to tell me before, but that Percy—" The name was a reviling. "—had urged her to promise that she wouldn't until I was an

old woman, or married, so that I'd 'understand'—and she'd half-way promised. When I was born, she wanted to call me 'Clotilde Hooghtyling Westbrook,' but Percy wouldn't hear of it, so she compromised on 'Smith': even then, after he'd convinced her that she was vile and sinful and filled her with humble gratitude by marrying her to save her from 'shame,' she had wicked impulses toward the Truth. 'Smith' was her first rebellion, and her rebellion went on until she was ready to leave him when his stomachic cancer developed, and she had to turn to and nurse him until he died. It was a bitter marriage for her, for all everybody thought it so fine—and would have thought it a thousand times finer if they'd known all the circumstances! But no one ever guessed—the Reverend Percy was an accomplished liar, I gather, on all counts.—Why, you know, he always kept away from me, could hardly bear to see me, because he said I reminded him of my mother's sin—jealous male brute that he was! And he informed a dear lady parishioner, who repeated it to me at his funeral as a sign of his saintliness, that it was painful for him to see me because he could not but be reminded of the pain it had cost my dear mother to bring me into the world! As a matter of fact, she had an exceptional easy time with me—and she always looked back on that pain as one of the sweetest parts of life.—Good God—he even told that estimable lady parishioner that he could not bring himself to have any more children because he couldn't bear the thought of my mother's suffering—as if he hadn't tried, in his own words, to make my mother as deeply and truly his as she had been that other man's—only to prove that he was as sterile of body as he was of mind!"

Clotilde paused, exuding bitterness. Mrs. Kling breathed, "Gracious Heavens!" "Why?" asked the girl. "I'm almost beginning to fear I'm not Modern at all," explained Mrs. Kling.

"Well, I try to be," said Clotilde. "Modern means to me just finding out the truth, calling things by their real names, and trying to live up to facts. Maybe I've found out more things than most Modern young women because I had a lonely childhood, and a mind that had to wonder. You know the Reverend Percy kept my mother so busy fetching and carrying for him that I was practically an orphan until he died." There was no sign of boasting about her, either of her knowledge or of her misfortunes. "But I'm not so very different from a good many other young women of my age—I mean, not more Modern—am I, Edna?"

"Well—yes, and no." Edna had been deeply serious for a longer time than usual, but she rose to the question. "I've just been reading Henry James' 'Daisy Miller,'—comparing her to you Modern girls of her age, you know. It was interesting. It struck me that you Modern maidens, especially you Modernistic ones, are exposed to diseases of knowledge and experience that would have killed a Daisy Miller of a few years ago with great agony and thoroughness. And yet you remain healthy—apparently: healthier than I do, mixture of the past and present that I am! You especially, Clotilde, for all you know—and what you've been through the Lord only knows!—you remind me, time and again, of a great big round-eyed innocent kid! I suppose you're only different in degree, in purity of essence, rather than in quality,

from many Modern maidens. Have you ever read 'Daisy Miller'?"

"No. I've read 'The Golden Bowl,' and dipped into a few others. But continuous adultery, hinted at, played with, gets nauseating."

"I thought a good many of you Modernists believed in adultery?"

"I don't. Because somebody is usually getting deceived, lied to. The truth first. I'm thinking of concealed, and Jamesesque literary, adultery, of course. Open adultery isn't any worse now than in the time of George Eliot—and George Sand. Nor any better."

"Well, I perceive that you're a sister to the well-known Daniel, all right!" Mrs. Kling laughed, and became more her usual sprightly self. She surveyed Clotilde with narrowed eyes and a face that suggested considerable inner consideration of Clotilde's revelations. "But, say, Miss Modernist—" She smiled quizzically, dubiously. "You aren't really serious in your intention to—to spread your ancestry abroad, are you?"

"I certainly am! I have a right to my father. I think I have some claims on him. He accepted a certain responsibility when he became my father, didn't he?"

"Uh—not consciously—would you say?"

But Clotilde was too much concerned with Truth to appreciate levity. "That makes no difference whatever. He ought to have realized his responsibility. So ought my mother. The truth about me ought to come out to make people realize that responsibility, if for no other reason. It's keeping the truth, the responsibility, so carefully covered up, that makes so much misery possible. Why, just for one thing, the children of unmarried

parents have only one-fourth the chance of reaching their twentieth year that the children of parents who accept their responsibilities have! I've been endangered, in body and even more in mind, as thousands, and tens of thousands of other illegitimate children are being endangered—”

“Really, Clo’—for the Lord’s sake, let’s have a cigarette! Here!”

Clotilde pushed aside the offered humidor. She was aroused, poignantly determined. “I’ve been under a handicap—even though I’ve been luckier than most fatherless children: I’ve had to miss the joy and sweetness of having a father, of having the counsel and masculine guidance of a father on which a daughter is especially dependent, just as a son is especially dependent on his mother. If I’m unbalanced—which I don’t admit—my lonely childhood may have had a good deal to do with it. I wish to Heaven my mother had married a good and Modernistic man, instead of that smooth, lying, sanctimonious, archaic hypocrite, the Reverend Percy Westbrook—a man whom I could have loved, and honored, and called father—for, to tell the truth, this afternoon has made me afraid that old Mr. Hooghtyling isn’t in a position to be a good father to me. And yet he’s got such a lot I expected him to have—and a lot more—such good old wisdom of experience, that I haven’t got, and sadly need. I won’t give that old farmer up *yet*—even if he does object—”

“I’ll bet—” Mrs. Kling stifled a hysterical little laugh. “—you won’t!”

“No, I won’t! Am I anything he has a right to be ashamed of? Why, I could make his life broader, richer

—just as he could mine. Only knowing about him has—I always wondered, for instance, why I loved pine groves, why the sound of the wind in tall pines at night made me thrill and quiver all over—now I know! It was one glorious midnight, down in Morseley's pine grove—think of it, Edna!—right down in Morseley's grove—when it was younger, and more beautiful, and larger than it is now—with only one little brown bungalow in it instead of half a dozen—it was in that little brown bungalow that they—that I—”

Mrs. Kling gasped: “Here, dear—do have a cigarette! This is an occasion that demands the soothing influence of cigarettes! You’re all excited—and I confess this is getting almost too much for my nerves!”

Clotilde declined, with some petulance: “I don’t care for a cigarette, thanks. I smoke cigarettes as Sherlock Holmes took his cocaine—when I’m bored with life. I’m not bored now. I’ve always wanted a father—it has been one of the crying needs of my life—and now that I’ve found one, I’m not going to let him hang back, neglecting both his duty and his privilege—”

“Oh, ye gods!”

“I won’t give him up for any beastly old-fashioned ideas of morality—nor for anybody else! I don’t think he’d object so much for himself—he’s an awfully sanc old rube—but, Edna, he’s got a *wife!* She weighs two hundred and fifty pounds—or more—has cold, belligerent blue eyes, a hand like a ham—is accustomed to build stone walls in her spare time—”

“*Clo-tilde!* Ha-ha-ha—Ha-ha-ha! For *pity’s sake*—”

“This Amazon—she rushed up to me, and *pushed* me, Edna—why, I thought a Kansas cyclone had struck me!

I was looking after him in precisely the proper way, too—giving him first aid—you see, he, my father, fainted—he's a poor little withered man, a broken-down farmer, and he has a weak heart—and I'd been talking to him—rather excitedly, perhaps,—not thinking—”

“ Hee-ee-ee! He'd need some heart if you really open up on him—Ha-eeh! Oo-eeh! And the lady stonemason— Uh, uh, eeh! Clo-tilde! I'm having hysterics! I am! Hee-ee-ee! Clotilde!”

“ Don't be foolish, Edna; I'm telling you nothing to get excited about. I'm telling you nothing but the plain, simple, unadorned truth. It was sickening; I think I have every right to feel aggrieved. I told the woman, Ethel is her name, that I was his daughter, that he was my father—and I had a right to help him—but she disregarded me—after *pushing* me aside like so much alley dirt—I don't think she even heard me—she just picked him up—imagine it, Edna,—she picked him up as if she had been the Strong Lady in a circus, and he the Living Skeleton—”

But Edna, who had ill-advisedly tried to restrain herself in order to imbibe more pure, unadulterated truth, quite suddenly went to pieces. She screamed horrifically, waved her arms in the air, babbled, “ *Water!* ” and “ *Hysterics—I tell you I've got 'em—don't sit there—get me some water!* ” and so checked the supply of truth at its source.

With admirable celerity, in view of the unfortunate effects of an attempt to apply first aid to another victim of her pure truth earlier that same day, Clotilde fetched water from the kitchen and brought Mrs. Kling around. Woodbridge's cleverest gossip emerged a damp, di-

sheveled, wabbly, pallid wreck, from successive fits of laughing, crying, and chattering, all interspersed by considerable screams.

"*Damnation!*" she gasped; "and *I* haven't a weak heart, either! I don't know when I've given way like that—but, merciful Heavens—" She shuddered, sighed, pressed her head against Clotilde's ministering shoulder. "I suppose it's partly because the beastly war has put my nerves on the blink," she surmised feebly.

Clotilde apologized: "Well, I'm sorry if my little troubles were the last straw." She added: "I rather thought I'd escape the war, up here in rustic Woodbridge."

"Well, you won't," sighed Edna; "although one reason I was so glad to see you was because I thought we might be able to stir up some counter-excitement to take everybody's mind off that beastly topic—thank God for your lady stone-mason, and reluctant pa—they may do poor Artie as much good as they have me—even though I may seem, just at present—" She paused, raised her head, listened a moment, and subsided. "How appropriate—they're coming!" she announced, with a weak, semi-hysterical chuckle. "Arthur, the dear Talbots, Helen Hope, who has nerves—and no wonder, with her appurtenance—and sprightly Carey—I hear the car! How beautiful—your *début*—holding a trophy of your prowess—" She raised her voice, shuddered convulsively with unsuppressible joy: "But, dear, trust me—whatever happens I won't permit—ha-ee!—I won't permit anybody to *push* you! *Hee-ah!*"

She screamed frightfully into Clotilde's ear, and returned to the depths of hysterics. Stimulated feet

resounded on the front porch; Mr. Arthur Kling rushed into view, all eyes and mouth, gathered the salient feature of the situation at a glance, pushed Clotilde violently out of the way, picked up his wife bodily. "Edna—Edna, dearest!" he besought her, carrying her over to a convenient divan.

But Edna, having preserved consciousness long enough to see Clotilde pushed, sent a peal of maniacal laughter into his face, and relaxed in a dead faint.

Then there was much hurrying to and fro, more water, knocking over of chairs, subdued exclamations, and half a glass of brandy. Through it all, standing with outraged dignity in a corner of the room, Clotilde looked on, quite as she had looked on at a somewhat similar proceeding in a corner of Henry Hooghtyling's orchard, a few hours before. Being in possession of more truth about the trouble than the others, she knew that matters were not serious, and Edna's speedy return to consciousness vindicated her.

"Where's Clotilde—where's that blessed girl?" were Edna's first words.

Thus summoned, Clotilde did not emulate her dignified, unnoticed escape of the orchard escapade. She walked, with some austerity, over to the sofa where Edna was lying in state, surrounded by Talbots, Miss Helen Hope, Carey Beemis, and especially by Mr. Kling.

"My dear—it was more than worth it!" said Edna, holding out her hand. "Artie?"

Mr. Kling, immediately stirred in his hostly instincts, stammered: "Why—Miss Westbrook—Clotilde—pardon me, really—in the excitement of the moment—" and

offered to shake hands. Clotilde, softening into smiles, shook hands with him. He was a lanky, loose-jointed, over-nosed gentleman, with sharply retreating chin and forehead, an engaging ensemble of humanity that, assisted always by a determined vacuousness of expression and a baby's-eyebrow of a mustache, had the general effect of a cane-sucking Piccadilly, Unter den Linden, or Fifth Avenue swell. Edna had become interested in him because it cheered her up just to look at him, and married him because he was equally fine-fibered as man and artist. Though there were Prussians in his ancestry, his every-day activities suggested that he had the soul of a conscientious, beauty-loving rabbit.

"You see, dear, he didn't recognize you, or he wouldn't have *pushed* you," Edna contributed faintly from the couch; "*would* you, Arthur?"

"Certainly *not*—purely an accident—thousand pardons—momentarily forgot myself," murmured Arthur, overcome with contrition.

"And the dear Talbots, Gracey and Paul, I think you've met?" continued Mrs. Kling, managing to get some customary zest out of playing hostess, horizontal and enfeebled though she was. "And Helen Hope—our sufficient proof that Greenwich Village has nothing on Woodbridge?" Clotilde smiled and bowed. "But Mr. Carey Beemis I don't think you've met. Miss Clotilde—ah—Miss Clotilde—ah?"

"Westbrook!" supplied Mr. Kling, in a spasmodic undertone, giving a suggestion of secrecy by putting his right palm up to the end of his mustache.

"Ah, yes—Miss Clotilde Westbrook, of course." Edna smiled wanly. "My mind, it seems, has not quite

recovered. For a moment, dear, I was in doubt about your last name—think of it! I hope—”

Clotilde interrupted evenly: “It might be better if you’d just introduce me by my real name, Hooghty-ling—” but Mr. Carey Beemis, advancing with outstretched hand, beamingly unconscious of the sick-room atmosphere, drowned her out with a vigorous: “Say, this is a *real pleasure!*” He received her hand in a grasp that was at once firm and gentle, administered several throbbing little pressures. “I’ve just missed meeting you a hundred times—back in the Village, you know,—always hearing about you. Edna was telling me, only this morning down at the post office, that you were expected, and, believe me, I’ve been on the *qui vive* ever—”

“Although it does seem strange,” put in Edna, in a voice faint but thrilling as if drawn from subconscious distances, “Clo’, dear, that, since you’ve met Miss Hope, you haven’t met Mr. Beemis, also.”

A distinct vibration, almost a shock, carrying a distressful silence in its wake, penetrated the group, from Talbots to Mr. Beemis, lingering particularly around the handsome, athletic, sprightly personality of Mr. Beemis. “Oh—I’m afraid that was not thoughtful,” Edna apologized doubtfully, innocently; “I’m afraid it’s the brandy—that, and the hundred-proof pure Truth that Clotilde has been regaling me with. I always like my Truth with a little water in it—or at least a chaser—and Clotilde’s brand is—heady in the extreme.”

Miss Hope divertingly asked: “Has Miss Westbrook been shocking you?” and looked at Clotilde with a mixture of mock and genuine asperity, moods which became

the austerity of a person and dress that might have inspired cubistic art. Helen Hope's face was an almost perfect parallelogram, her mouth was large and straight, her eyebrows were straight black lines, even the formation of her large dark eyes and heavy, flat-tipped nose was cubistic. She wore a frock of brown woolen homespun, cut with the squareness of a gunny sack, square-cut at the throat, and her black hair was "bobbed" with mathematical accuracy. Even in that ultra-Modernistic section of New York City called Greenwich Village there were few young ladies more ultra-Modernistic in appearance, theory, and practice. Comparison with her was enough to make Clotilde seem downright old-fashioned.

"Yes, Clo' has been shocking me—magnificently," admitted Mrs. Kling. "Haven't you, dearie?" She took Clotilde's unresponsive hand. "Clo' has given me a succession of such delightful shocks that I don't regret my hysterics one bit. And now, if the others will kindly excuse us, dear—" Edna gingerly sat up and felt for her back hair. "I think I'll let you make amends by escorting me as far as my bedroom, and helping me get to rights a bit."

Clotilde submissively escorted the elder woman across the living-room, and into seclusion. "What shall I do, Edna—will you let me fix your hair?" she asked.

"I will not," said Edna. "I'm perfectly capable of fixing my own hair—I'm quite all right. I just wanted to get you alone to warn you that there's every indication that Carey Beemis intends to start campaigning for you at once; and I thought I ought to warn you that, whenever Carey starts a new campaign, which he does on the average of once a month, poor Helen has doldrums that

would make my recent exercise look like a plugged nickel. He belongs to her, you know."

Clotilde asked: "Do people still *belong* to each other?"

"Don't be foolish." Edna finished coiling up her hair, and fluffed out the grayish strands at her temples. "Of course, I know all the moralistic Modernistic patter, my dear—it's especially interesting as delivered by Helen—perfect sex freedom, and all that dope. But, just the same, Carey is her appurtenance. She tries to be philosophical, but she bleeds at every pore whenever he shows signs of putting his mutually agreed upon freedom into practice. Why on earth she's so crazy about him I can't imagine—maybe it's because she isn't married to him. Of course she makes herself a burden by sticking to him like a burr—as no intelligent, lawful wife who had any sense ever would—high price she pays, it seems to me, for being Modernistically free—and I suppose it's equally hard on him. I've been urging them to get married; then it would be easier for them to separate—and they certainly ought to separate.—I suppose you wouldn't agree with all this?"

"Jealousy isn't confined to Modernists," said Clotilde.

"Well—all right. I just wanted to warn you that, if you let Carey attach himself to you, as he certainly intends to do if he can, you'll run the danger of putting Helen into an insane asylum—or an untimely tomb. That was one thing. Another was, dear—" Edna hesitated. "I may be quite wrong, but I wanted to urge you to put off announcing your—change of name—for a little while. You quite gave me cold chills when you accepted the opening that I was foolish enough to give you—luckily Carey rushed into the breach! The fact is,

dear, I was thinking it might be hard on that old farmer—especially if his wife, and the neighbors, don't take it in a sensible, Modern way. And, forgive me, dear, but I was thinking a little of—of your own mother, too. You see, I'm ten years older than you are, Clo'; I hope you won't think I'm merely an old-fashioned, meddling—"

"Not at all—I don't—but I do think, Edna, you ought to give me credit for taking my mother into consideration." Clotilde walked about the room, clear-eyedly reflective, considerate. "It was pretty fine of her to tell me—and it was equally fine of her to admit that I had every right to see my father,—to tell him, and to tell my friends, everybody I wanted to. The only condition she made was that I shouldn't ask her to see him. Of course I think she was wrong—she's gone off to California for a two-months' visit for fear I'd convert her—"

"I sympathize with her!" put in Edna.

"Well, if I give up making the matter public, for the present at least, I do think that my father, poor, old, over-worked, broken, gentle-man that he is, should have the benefits that I can give him—yes, and that I should have the benefits he can give me, too! We have a right to each other. His present wife must recognize that I, his daughter, have some rights she is bound to respect! Why, they may have a mortgage on their home—any-way, a few hundred dollars wouldn't come amiss up there, I know—and I'd like to travel a little while with him, my father—get him some new clothes—teach him things—have him teach me! I want to board up there, at least—haven't I a right to get acquainted with my own father? Especially when I'm ready and anxious to do so many things for him—why, just to mention one

little detail, he ought to have all his horrible old snags of teeth removed—I couldn't help noticing the state of his teeth when he was unconscious in my arms—and a nice set of false teeth in their place. No wonder he isn't healthy with such horrible, black, malodorous—really, Edna, it was awful! Probably he's had no one to point out their danger to his health—and probably he couldn't spare the money if he understood it. Then, too, I'm sure they have no bathroom in the house; he—he didn't seem altogether *antiseptic*, Edna!"

Edna suggested weakly: "But, dear, couldn't you find a way of presenting him with a set of teeth, and a bathroom, without getting him in wrong with his wife?"

"I seriously doubt it." Clotilde strode across the little room with the lowered eyes and knit brows of a strategizing general. "I think there's no doubt but that his wife keeps him under her big, brawny thumb—he seemed fairly terrified, actually in *fear*, when he mentioned her name. Probably she abuses him horribly, leads him around by the nose—Edna, suppose *your own* father, withered, broken, old before his time, were in *my* father's predicament? *Ethel!*—I fairly hate Ethel already—big blonde tyrant and vixen! And that poor, gentle, old half-sick man, *my* own father—with Ethel's big fist and big voice driving him—"

"I pass—let's go out now, dear," Edna interrupted faintly. "I see you've got more dope on this matter than I have. Especially about Ethel. My sympathies are divided, however. I begin to feel that Ethel made a large mistake when she pushed you!"

"Seriously, dear—when I think of my poor old father in the power of that woman, I shudder!" said Clotilde.

## CHAPTER V

MR. HOOHTYLING ENDEAVORS TO APPLY BRAKES  
TO THE TRUTH, BUT DECIDES THAT, ALL THINGS  
CONSIDERED, YOU CAN'T TELL FROM THE LOOKS  
OF A FROG HOW FUR IT'LL JUMP

At precisely five-thirty the next morning, Henry placed his angular right elbow against Ethel's well-cushioned left fifth rib, and pushed. He did it delicately, with no unnecessary vigor; even though he had done it on an average of three times every morning for some twenty years, he never resorted to violence until violence was proved unavoidable.

Ethel slept on, snoring gently. Irritation with her for being asleep, for having had a somewhat sonorous night's rest while he had been unable to close his eyes, made him put a shade more shock than usual into Push No. 2.

Ethel awoke. "Yes, Hen," she said.

"It's five-thirty, Ethel," he told her, with crispness that years of repetition had not staled.

"Yes, Hen." She sat up in bed, rubbing her eyes, blinking cheerfully at the weather through the little half-opened lace-curtained window beside the bed. "It's going to be a fine day. For all it's Saturday, I think I'll just get the washings cleared out o' the way. Then I can go right at picklin', come Monday," she announced with sprightliness and decision.

"Well, you'll never get at neither washin' nor picklin' if you don't get up."

"Why, what's the matter with you this mornin', Hen?" she asked, not with any suggestion of fault-finding but with gentle, wifely concern. She got out into the narrow aisle that separated the bed from the window-wall of the six-by-eight bedroom, and competently, as she did everything, began to dress. "Didn't you rest well?"

Henry showed, by silence, that he wasn't prepared to engage in personalities.

"I'll bet I know why—after that—" She shut her large mouth firmly on the indignant explanation that seemed to have burst up, against her will, from her voluminous bosom. "Excuse me for mentionin' it—I didn't mean to mention it, Hen," she apologized.

Grim silence from Henry.

"I won't mention it any more, if it troubles you."

Henry wriggled under the bedclothes. "That's what you've promised a dozen times a'ready, Ethel," he reminded her patiently.

"Well—and haven't I done pretty well keepin' that promise, too?"

"Not but what I could suggest a few improvements."

"Well, now, I think I done pretty well!" Her voice was all gentleness, but as she finished she stamped a foot down into a shoe, a neat shoe but a trifle too small for her foot as is a lady's prerogative, with a jar that shook the floor. "You ain't maybe took into consideration my feelin's, Hen. It ain't so many wives, comin' down the road to find you lyin' with your head in a strange woman's lap, and she pattin' your face—and good-lookin', too, and young—I'll say that for her—"

"Now, Ethel—"

"Well, I just want to say, Hen, that it ain't so many wives would promise right away not to ask a question, not to say a word about it, not to think about it even! I can't keep from thinkin' about it—you hadn't ought to have asked it of me, Hen!"

She started, fully dressed, for the kitchen, shaking the house with the unconscious might and determination of her strides.

"Well, leastways, it didn't seem to hender you from restin' good," he called after her. There was relenting in his voice. Out in the kitchen, which opened directly off the bedroom, stove-lids were removed with clattering vigor, pine kindlings snapped in her powerful hands.

"For all you know, I dreamed about it," she retorted. She included in her considerable library a large dream-book, and read and believed in it with a devoutness suggestive of a Modern disciple of Freud.

"I'm always tellin' you there's nothin' into dreams—savin', maybe, too much pie and pickles for supper!" Hen announced, with some heat. She demurred: "Well, it was less'n a month ago I dreamed of dogs fightin', and that means a strange woman is goin' to cross my path and interfere with the affections of my husband. Almost half the dreams I've had ever since I can remember, it says under the Women's Interpretation colyum, for me to beware of a strange woman; of course I don't believe into it—"

"Yes, because under 'bout half all the dreams into your old book, it says 'Beware of a strange woman'! Ain't I had you read me pages to show you how foolish it was? Sometimes you give me a pain strikes right to my stummick, you do, Ethel, for a fact!"

That brought silence for a little while; then, to the accompaniment of a sizzling of frying pork, Mrs. Hooghtyling began again:

"I wouldn't be interested in all that stuff 'bout strange women, Hen, nor I wouldn't be worried so much 'bout what I saw with my own eyes yestiddy, but you know I always had the feelin' that maybe, some time, you might be tempted to—to elope."

"Now don't go bringin' all that up agin, Ethel!"

"That somehow you wasn't—" She distributed heavy crockery with a heavy hand, and her voice bespoke a heavy heart. "—mine alone."

"Uh-huh!" Hen growled, really aroused. "You got to quit readin' that dream-book, and all those lousy ten-cent books you get down to Kingston, Ethel, or you got to quit believin' such nonsense—now, one o' two things you got to do!"

Ethel hazarded, sniffling a little: "Truth is stranger than fiction, Hen."

Mr. Hooghtyling got out of bed, began the process of dressing by kicking out his legs to shake his night-wrinkled underwear into place, growled, "Yes—accordin' to them lousy paper books!" and put on his pants. "Is breakfast 'bout ready?"

"Yes. Want your eggs boiled or fried?"

"Boiled this mornin'; my stummick feels awful. And, for that same reason, I don't want to hear you talk any more, Ethel. You got out o' bed on the wrong side this mornin', and, when a person does that, they'd best keep quiet till after breakfast, anyway."

They breakfasted in absolute silence. While Henry, because of the slowness in feeding which an almost com-

plete lack of teeth imposed on him, still lingered over his panny-cakes and coffee, Ethel finished, rose without a word, took down a red cloth-bound book from the clock-shelf, sat down beside the east kitchen window, and began to read. Henry wrinkled his eyes and peered in an effort to make out whether she was disobeying instructions. "What you readin', Ethel?" he asked, at last.

"'Tisn't one of those ten-cent books from Kingston—it's '*Loved and Conquered*', and Mrs. Morse lent it to me. It's a good book."

Henry expressed no opinion, and Ethel read on until, with the ended breakfast of her lord and master, milking time should arrive.

She had made him a good woman. The order and cleanliness of the big kitchen, from stove to windows, the fresh lace curtains, the potted geraniums, and particularly the small eastward bay-window where she sat in the morning sunshine, spoke of her. By doing incredible washings for artusses and summer boarders, she had paid for having that window put in. Thanks to their separate financial arrangements, by which Henry kept the money gained from eggs, butter, and farm produce—for these things came from the farm which he owned, even if her work went into the preparation of them—while she kept the rewards of pie and cake sales, and of washings, she had recently presented him with a new winter overcoat, herself with a green silk gown, and had the large satisfaction of having her own works praise her within her gates.

Everybody said she had made him a good woman, Henry first of all—although her excellence was not to have been expected, seeing that she had been born a

Whipple. The Woodbridge Whipples were the township's prize examples of shiftlessness, drink, vermin, and degeneration.

As a girl, Ethel, barefoot until Christmas and little better than barefoot afterwards, had cut her cord of wood a day, by the side of her only industrious brother, on the old Whipple homestead, a little higher up the mountain. She had driven the oxen while he held the plow, helping to fight back the sedulous enemy, hunger, of all the Woodbridge Whipples. Her brother had long since gone the common Whipple way, helped by whisky that was as much an effect as a cause, but Ethel had risen.

She had gone to school exactly one day in her life, but, at thirty years old, after she had recovered from unsanitary child-bearing and fighting against odds that nearly killed her, she had taught herself to read. She had read her way through dream-books, ten-cent fiction, into romances a little less lurid and lying, spurred on by the "artusses" for whom she did washing, and with whom she discussed literature and life. Her washing, her peddling of strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, and huckleberries in season, she accomplished with an increase, rather than a loss, of her dignity. "Honest work's always honorable," she was accustomed to announce, with challenging clarity of big blue eyes, and her dignity increased with invariable agreement. She was as dignified, and statuesque, and determined in her opinions, and as sure of having her own way—granted only that her own way be, as it generally was, the way of her aforesaid lord and master—as any dowager duchess of her favorite romances.

"What Ethel hasn't done!" Henry sometimes re-

marked, shaking his head, overcome with awe and admiration for his helpmeet's numerous works. In addition to stonework and excavating, she helped to butcher calves, beeves, and pigs; and the world was yearly richer for the numerous calves, piggies, chickens, eggs, vegetables, fruits, cereals, preserves, pickles, and flowers of her propagating, not to mention her equally important attainments in the way of babies and grandbabies. Her two sons and two daughters had taken partners of her own choosing, and the immediate government of them all was a matriarchate. When wiseacres spoke of the degeneration among the Woodbridge natives, they omitted mention of the rise of Mrs. Henry Hooghty-tyling.

Sitting near her shining kitchen range, price \$45 in Kingston five years ago, and worth \$65 now, without a gray hair in her nut-brown head, ruddy, massy, motherly, clear of face and eye, perfect of teeth, reading without glasses at fifty-one years old, she looked the conqueror she was, a sturdy symbol of the results of natural country living. Her husband, broken and withered in all save mind in spite of years fewer by seven, was another symbol of the same life.

He finished, pushing back his chair as a sign of it. Ethel hurriedly arose, and went into the pantry, leaving her book on the clock-shelf as she passed; she emerged, bearing two large tin milking pails. Henry, taking the old green hat from behind the door, followed her weakly out to the barn. While she cleaned out the stable behind their two cows, whistling a cheerful accompaniment to the bumping of her pitchfork against the window-casing whence the fresh manure flew outward to its proper pile,

Henry engaged gruntingly in the more gentle task of preparing cow-feed.

They all settled down, the cows to munching, Hooghty-ling man and wife to milking. The younger cow was both skittish and hard to milk, and therefore fell, by right, to Ethel.

"I was talkin' with a man down to Brinkses' store couple days ago," said Henry, with a casual drawl that intimated important matter on tap.

"That so? Who was it?" asked Ethel, from her neighboring stall.

"It don't make no difference," said Henry.

"Slip-slip! Slip-slip!" said the milk in the pails.

"It don't, because," Henry explained deliberately, "the important thing's what he was tellin' me, not who he was."

"Slip-slip!" said the milk.

"Well—ef you ain't intrusted—" Henry grunted, after waiting for comment.

"I may be intrusted, but I'm not goin' to open my mouth just to be the same as told to keep it shut! I think you're the one got out o' bed on the wrong side, Hen!" returned Mrs. Hooghtyling, with unusual spirit.

"Aw, jimminy-crickets—my stummick's feelin' awful this morning—" apologized Henry.

"And your stummick will prob'lly be awful, too, till you have them old teeth out. Ain't I told you—and ain't the doctor told you—"

"Can't ev'ybody git to be fifty years old and have ev'y tooth in their heads good as new, like you, Ethel," he told her.

"Sure not. But you could have them old snags out

and some false teeth, if you wasn't such a coward 'bout goin' to the dentist.—What was it that man was tellin' you?"

Henry cleared his throat cautiously. "Why, nothin' much; he was just a-tellin' me," said Henry, "'bout a man way over in Columbia County. Man kept a groc'ry store over there. Ev'ybody thought he was all right. Old man he was, married, honest, always paid his bills. Then it comes out he's got a daughter nobody ever knew about."

"Daughter by a prev'ous marriage?" suggested Mrs. Hooghtyling.

"As I recollect, he hadn't been married afore."

"Child not born in wedlock?" Her voice grated over "wedlock."

"Seems to me," admitted Henry, "'twasn't. Seems the feller'd been kinda wild in his youth, long before he married his wife—though he'd made up for it by bein' straight's a die for years and years."

"Slip-slip!" hissed the milk, with great vigor, into Ethel's pail. "Such things is just like murder—they'll always come out!" announced Ethel.

"There you go—formin' judgments!" Henry was both disgusted and indignant. "How many times I told you, Ethel, not to go formin' judgments till you got more'n a word or two o' hearsay to go by?"

Mrs. Hooghtyling protested: "Why, Hen, I didn't express no judgment—"

"Comparin' it to murder!"

"Well—"

"Well?"

Mrs. Hooghtyling's spunk mastered her: "If it ain't's

bad's murder, it's almost—and you needn't go try arguin' me out of it, Hen Hooghtyling—for I've got the Good Book to back me up—and what does it say about a man that lusteth after a woman? You can't get around that—you're just contrairey this mornin', Hen—and maybe you got good cause, too!" The milking of the younger and harder cow, which had been suspended during this outburst, was resumed at double speed.

Henry, after waiting for the atmosphere to cool a little, grunted, spat, and remarked: "I might a-knowned you'd take it like that, Ethel—forget yourself—"

" You know, Hen Hooghtyling, in your heart," Ethel interrupted, " you take it just the same way; but you're contrairey, and won't admit it. Tell the truth once, now, and shame the Devil—don't you—in your heart?"

" You're wrong,—but they ain't no use arguin' with you when you're by way o' forgettin' yourself," returned Henry; but his words carried so little conviction that Ethel, shortly afterward, began to whistle in high good humor. She was always much cheered up when she forced him to admit that she was even half-way right on any of their few points of disagreement.

Ethel, still cheerful, carried the two pails of milk into the house, leaving Henry to feed the pigs, release and feed the chickens, and gather the eggs. He pottered rheumatically over his morning chores, grunting to himself, scowling at nothing, thinking hard. Toward seven o'clock he slouched through the kitchen, where Ethel was busy sorting out the two Woodbridge washings to which departing summerites had reduced her former weekly six, silently entered the bedroom and began to dress himself

in his Sunday clothes. He reappeared, fifteen minutes later, outwardly changed in everything but the faded green hat. In his sagging black city suit, his low white collar—grown at least four sizes too large for his scrawny neck—he looked more than ever like a discouraged turkey gobbler.

"Seein's you keep talkin' 'bout it so infernal much, Ethel," he announced, "callin' me a coward, and all that—I'm goin' down to Kingston and have them teeth out! I'm goin'—" He became somewhat tragic. "—to face the music!"

Mrs. Hooghtyling gasped: "Well, say! I'm glad of it! But whatever's got into you?"

He passed her in silent dignity, as grim and determined as if he had just volunteered for extra-hazardous service. She beamed after him. "Anything you want down to Kingston?" he asked from the door.

"If you'll come back with them old snags out, I'll be satisfied," she retorted, still suffering from joyful shock. "I won't burden your mind with anything else—you might forget what you went after! Tee-hee!" she simpered opulently between her large white teeth. He glared at her, and turned away. "But when you see that sign—that big gold tooth—don't git a faintin' fit!" she called after him; and there was some concern mixed with her badinage.

Henry, with grimness increased by this levity, full of the weighty matters that faced him, slouched rapidly out along the bluestone flagging—another evidence of Ethel's wifely industry—and hit the main road. The day was at its prime, green and gold all over the hillside, with only here and there the scarlet signal of a sumach or wood-

bine to show that fall was at hand. Second-growth pine, dogwood, cedar, oak, and hickory made a tangle on either side of the down-slanting road, and straggled back into wastes that had been the cultivated fields of another generation: fields reclaimed by the labors of a Hercules from rocks and forest, now allowed to return to wood-bearing and beauty, because better ones had been found elsewhere.

He jolted downward, winding along the winding road, knees crooked to cushion his rickety frame as much as possible, stumbling whenever his feet lighted on a stone that his far-sighted eyes hadn't seen. Inside his precariously balanced head, his cerebral centers were alert and active. He was on his way to carry out the plans laid in the sleeplessness of the preceding night. His first bit of strategy, having to do with the mythical sinner over in Columbia County, had eventuated precisely according to expectation. He knew what to expect in one corner, at least, if Clotilde insisted on revealing the plain truth. As behooved him, he was on his way to see that Truth kept to her closed carriage. At least that she delay her *début* for a few days.

He passed the Brooks' homestead, a huge, white, wide-verandahed farmhouse with numerous tidy outbuildings, once the center of a struggling farm, of late years enjoying greater prosperity as a summer boarding house. He dawdled along after he had entered the tree-overarched road again; he had plenty of time to catch the ten-thirty stage, time to meander and to think. "She ain't thought —she'll come around when I tell her how things is," he told himself: "yet she looked 'sif she was the sort would git what she went after, too."

It worried him, that part, and yet it made him proud of her, also. He was proud of Clotilde: in a strange, dubious, hesitating way, he had come to accept the fact that she was, really, his daughter; and the sort of a daughter, too, that a good-for-nawthin' old farmer like himself might be proud of. His daughter—that was queer—he shook his head. In the eternal fitness of things, for which he had a keen sense, he knew she couldn't be his daughter—not really—not as Isabel and Esther were. She was rather unclassified in her relation to him—and yet, somehow, he had a claim on her; enough of a claim to make him prouder of her, say, than if she had been his boarder. He would have held up his head and spruced up his body a bit and generally displayed pride before the Brooks, if he'd had a boarder like Clotilde; he recognized her, at once, as superior to the general run of Brooks' boarders. And Clotilde, all youth and bookish language, and vibrant girlish beauty, was even nearer to him than a boarder; a little nearer, if not much; and, by that token, he felt a little more pride, more need of sprucing up, than if she had been his only to house and feed.

It was all very strange, full of tasty subtleties, of more than ordinary richness in feelings capable of escaping, not only through his language, but through the finer meshes of his thought. As she came up the road she had reminded him, just for a moment, of her mother. And that was strange, too, how fair and perfect the image of her young mother remained in his mind, despite all the droppings of deciduous years, the heaped-up detritus of his hard life. He was like an old stone quarry in which the clearing away of a "rubbage-heap" reveals

something rare and beautiful, and shameful, too, something to be kept hidden from all but the eyes of the worker who left it there.

How well he had hidden that strange, wonderful, shameful thing! In the years immediately following, when the young bucks of the countryside boasted their conquests, he had been silent, a little sneering, remembering his greater, more splendidly wicked adventure: an adventure too important to boast about, even if a sense of fair play hadn't played a great part in keeping him silent. But the greatest part in that had been taken by pure shock. For weeks following that October night he had gone about like a man miraculously left alive after the explosion of a blast at his very feet, full of a vague surprise at the ordinary business of life, slow of speech, sight, and hearing. The efforts of his old invalid mother to find out what was wrong with him had started denials and concealments that hardened with time. His sudden change, his harshness in insisting that nothing was wrong with him, that he be left alone, had helped to loosen her slender hold on life. She died without knowing. He had never even thought of telling anyone else what he had refused to tell her. His marriage with Ethel Whipple had been a commonplace, half-jocular affair between boy and girl who had grown up together; by the time, some fifteen years later, that real intimacy had grown up between them, other matters had crowded his boyish wildness out of mind.

It had been a young buck's wildness: that tradition he had fastened on an adventure that had been as much an over-suppressed, overwrought girl's doing as his own. He had been wild, wicked, sowed wild oats, and he had

intelligence enough to despise that sort of thing, to keep it out of sight, out of mind, to bury and stamp the earth down over it, as something that regrets wouldn't help, nor keeping above-ground, neither. It had lain securely enough under its old "rubbage-heap" until Clotilde appeared to remind him that it was there. The very essence and headiness of it, stripped of its cheap tradition, had surged from his weak heart through his atrophied veins as Clotilde recalled it, detail by detail, glorying in it as he had never dared to glory. Her words had not meant so much to him: indeed, her high-flown, bookish words had fallen for the most part on unhearing ears; but the rush of feeling, the quivering, surging, overwhelming emotions, torrents of spring and high fragrant winds from the south, all the intensity of love-magic that had inspired her while she talked, that had gone home to him, that had carried away the withered old man even in the vicarious revelation, even as the actuality had carried away the green youth. For a little while he had lived both a revivified and a communicated passion.

He entered the village, shaky with walking downhill and with vivid glimpses into his own past, and yet a little amused and contemptuous of his shakiness, too, and headed for the stage-owner's big purple barn. The old surrey stood in the barnyard; the two old nags were still in their stalls. He nosed about the barn, looking for Skeeter. Skeeter was discovered mending harness in the doorway of an adjacent shed.

Henry sauntered up to him, more dignified for city clothes if for nothing else. "'Lo, you Skeeter," he said.

"How'r, Mr. Hen Hoot?" returned Skeeter, with

the clever mixture of respect and familiarity that made him a good stage-driver. "Fine day!"

Henry asked: "Think you can make it's fur's West Beacon?"

"Sure thing!"

"Well, I might go 'long—if you think your rig'll last that fur."

"I guess it'll last," opined Skeeter, punching holes with some glumness.

"When'r you goin' to get that new motor-bus you're always talkin' 'bout?"

"Oh, I guess it'll be along pre' soon," said Skeeter, more glum than before.

"Yes; but when you get to be's old's I am, you'll just as leave keep drivin' the old stage." Henry sat down, finished with mere pleasantries, and turned astutely to the business in hand. "Not much traffic now, I guess?"

"Oh, quite a little," objected Skeeter, mistaking the nature of the business. When traffic got light, in the fall and winter, favored natives were sometimes hauled at half-price.

"Mostly goin' out, I guess?" Henry recognized the reason for defending the liveliness of traffic, but drove on straight to the heart of his business, slow but straight as was his custom.

"Yes. Mostly."

"But one or two still comin' in—not?"

"Oh, yes—one or two."

"Women artusses mostly, I guess." This was so near the heart of the matter that great casualness accompanied it. Skeeter looked up, interested. "Yes—one on 'em came in with me yestiddy." Skeeter blushed faintly,

but it was not noticeable, for his damask cheeks were habitually the color of ripe peaches.

"Ah—ho-oh?" Henry permitted his head to droop backward, thus allowing his lower jaw to sag in his habitual gesture of polite surprise. He appeared to ponder this revelation, to consider its possibilities. "Well, now, Ethel was just sayin' she wished she had 'nother wash or two—most o' the summer boarders goin' away's been kinda hard on her—she's had six washin's all summer, now she's only got two. Makes it kinda hard on her, with ev'ything up so infernal high count o' the war." He pushed his old green felt hat, the one discordant note in his otherwise perfect state of dressed-up-ness, backward and solemnly scratched the top of his head. "Maybe I might drop in and see that new artuss—she might have some wash, seein's she's been travelin'. Maybe she's stayin' at the Inn—or one o' the boardin' houses—the Tannery Brook, likely?"

He had arrived; in a second he would have quietly and painlessly extracted Clotilde's address.

"I thought she went up to your place yestiddy afternoon?" returned Skeeter, not surprised to discover trails of duplicity.

Henry suppressed any sign of shock; he acknowledged: "Well, she might 'uv; I wasn't home yestiddy all afternoon. I thought it might uv been someone else. Anyway, I guess Ethel forgot to ask her about the wash; so I guess I'll jest ja'nt 'long down to the Brook House—"

"She ain't stayin' at the Brook House," said Skeeter, pleasantly rising to expectations. "Last evenin' I drove her from the Brookses' down to Mr. Kling's. She's a friend o' theirs, I guess."

Henry thought the matter over for some minutes, disregarding Skeeter's obvious readiness to hear more about the particular woman-artuss they'd been discussing.

"It don't really make no difference," he decided, for external consumption; "but it ain't like Ethel to've forgot 'bout that wash."

He talked no more, neither while waiting for Skeeter to hitch up, nor on the hour's drive to West Beacon. The trial of nerve and courage that lay before him, the white-uniformed foe equipped with poison gas, flaming liquids, and diverse dangerous engines, waiting behind the sign of the big gold tooth, occupied his thoughts, even to the exclusion of Clotilde.

He had really resolved to have his snags removed; during his minute dissection of his recent experiences, in the course of the previous night, it had not escaped him that Clotilde, that very aristocratic and delicate young lady, who was somewhat nearer to him than a boarder, might have been shocked by the condition of his teeth. He knew well enough that they were offensive to anyone who came very near him; Ethel and his daughters kept him reminded of that. His thought of Clotilde, delicate-handed, fragrantly clean Clotilde, bending over his gaping mouth, as Ethel had informed him "that woman" had had the temerity to do, filled him with shame and regret for his unsightly, malodorous snags, and he was determined to have them out, cost what it might in horror, torture, and hard cash. By way of an additional "sprucing up," he had decided to buy himself a new hat. Incidentally, he intended to buy some little thing for Ethel, as was a mutual custom, whenever they went to Kingston either singly or together. Incidentally

No. 2, he was considering the advisability of buying something of the same nature for Clotilde. He had determined to see her before that day's sun was set. It might propitiate her if he could begin the interview by handing her some small gift.

He became so nervous during the half-hour on the train that he bought and consumed a large beer in a saloon across the street from the Kingston station. It seemed to help in facing the prospective sign of the gold tooth. Coming out, he debated taking a car or walking the half-mile from the station to the dentist's office. If he took a car, he'd have it over sooner; on the other hand, there was a rank waste of five good cents. Neither of these two considered reasons, but a large, instinctive wariness about rushing into danger, decided his course. He set out to walk, dawdling along, admonishing his nerve, scowling frightfully at passersby, scowling into show-windows.

In the course of the first three blocks he noticed a windowful of men's hats, and he stepped back to the curb to inspect them. He could look at men's hats, even though he had decided that it was snags first, that he would not purchase one before the dangers of dentistry had been everlastingly removed from the horizon. There was one, a black felt with a narrow brim, price \$1.50, that he rather hankered after; he determined to keep it in mind in case he saw nothing better further up town, and dawdled on.

A window-display of ladies' notions, belts, hats, gloves, and lace collars, set a snare for him before he had gone five blocks further. He stepped back, scowling because of the necessary interruption, to inspect this display with

a view toward remembrances for Ethel—and, perhaps, for Clotilde.

In one corner of the display he recognized several articles that, as he had learned from Ethel, were jabots, and dear to the feminine heart. "Not expensive, either," he informed himself, making out, by stepping to the outer edge of the sidewalk and craning his neck backward, that the figure on the card was twenty-five and not thirty-five, as he had at first suspected.

He stood and scowled at the jabots, full of weighty considerations. In case he took a car back to the station, it would hardly pay him to get off there just to buy two jabots, thus realizing not more than half the value of his car-fare. He might have to take a car back, too; he might be in no condition to walk, after that dentist had finished with him.

In spite of the eleven-o'clock sunshine pouring down on his back, he shuddered. That dentist—that cool, contained, hypocritically smiling demon wielding instruments of torture, surrounded by a torture-chamberful of mysterious horrors! Once he had had a snag removed—only once. It had gone too long, it was little more than massy roots: cutting, undermining, digging, and twisting had been necessary. There was neither cocaine nor gas in those days—not that the idea of these modern poisons appealed to him except as additional horrors. Yes, he would undoubtedly have to go back in a car. He ought to get both the jabots and the hat, for it was certain that he wouldn't be competent afterwards. He went in and pallidly purchased two jabots, one with red tassels, the other with tan; then he returned down the street and

bought the black hat. Even in its paper bag, it suggested an imminent funeral.

"Now I *got* to face the music!" he told himself, staggering up the street, faint with horrific anticipations and the large, unaccustomed beer. "I *got* to do it—they's nothin' else I *got* to do!"

At least there was nothing else he'd got to do, his earnestly searching mind announced, until he got back to Woodbridge.

It came over him, with an interesting shock, that his bout with the dentist might leave him so unstrung that he couldn't do what he had to do back there, later in the afternoon. He might be laid up for several days.

There was, on second thought, hardly any doubt about it. If one little tooth, one measly little snag, removed twenty years ago, when he was in his prime, had nearly done for him—what would six or seven huge snags do, cut, torn, twisted, blasted from their foundations, one after another, to the accompaniment of jabs of a needle, like a wasp's stinger, only more poisonous and no good to stop pain anyway—at least he had this on the authority of his Uncle Aleck, who had had experience, and was a reliable man:—well, what would all this do to him now that he was old, feeble, had an awful stummick, and wasn't good for nawthin', anyway? If it didn't kill him, he wouldn't be able to get out of bed for a week, at least.

It wasn't that he minded so much the danger to his life, of course, but, in the meantime, Clotilde might come again—might tell Ethel, while he lay helpless, hovering between life and death; the amazing young woman thinking, in a way that passed his understanding, that

Ethel would be pleased, delighted, as everybody ought to be. Clotilde had a way about her, a way suggesting that she was accustomed to get what she went after. That very afternoon, before he returned, Clotilde might make another effort to see him, to edify Ethel with the naked truth—

He yanked out his turnip-shaped watch: he had been in town twenty-five minutes: he would have just time to get back to the station and catch the up-train, for which Skeeter waited—if he hurried. He hurried. He ambled, he turkey-trotted, he skeedaddled swiftly for the station, caught the train just as it was pulling out, and found a seat in the smoker.

In spite of his recent scare about Clotilde, he lit his old pipe with more relish, he felt better all over, than he had for months. His old snags—it seemed downright friendly of them to be there, in their accustomed snaggi-ness, explorable with his tongue, as of old. What a fool he had been to think of a small matter like having them removed when dangers like Clotilde's careless handling of the truth were toward! Ten to one, they weren't responsible for his awful stummick, anyway. When he reflected that it was Clotilde who had almost been responsible for his loss of those harmless, friendly, and explor-able, if somewhat snaggy, companions of his declining years, he was downright sorry that he had spent twenty-five cents on a gift for her. She would have to learn, he told himself grimly, that he had some rights she was bound to respect.

Skeeter, putting a cheerful face on a disheartening scarcity of passengers for Woodbridge, was glad to see him. "Yes, sir, Mr. Hooghtyling—right over here for

Woodbridge!" he announced in his professional manner, and accompanied his sole fare over to the rickety surrey.

Both as a matter of policy, and because of a general feeling of renewed friendliness for the universe, Henry warmed up to Skeeter on the homeward road.

"I'll bet you'll get more fun out o' drivin' that new motor-bus than you do out o' steerin' these here candidates for the glue fact'ry—eh, boy?" he opined brightly.

"I dunno's I'll wait much longer—guess I'll go into a trainin' camp," said Skeeter, dourly contemplating the sway-backs of his candidates.

In view of the number of young men from Woodbridge already in training camps, there was nothing startling in this. Henry proceeded to business. "Have a good deal o' time on your hands between this here train and the one you meet at five o'clock, don't you?"

"Not a *whole* lot," hedged Skeeter; "but if they was anything I could do for you—"

"Well, now, that's kind of you to offer right up, like that," Henry complimented him.

"Oh, that's all right—"

Henry decreed: "I've knowed you a long time, Skeeter, and I've knowed your father afore you, and you're all right. Trouble'th lots o' these young fellers round here is they ain't got no manners, nor decent respect. I've watched you, I'm some judge o' boys, and when I tell you you'll come along all right, I mean it—that's all."

Skeeter preserved a diffident, and discreet, silence; the introduction presaged a considerable request.

"Referrin' to what you was mentionin' a minute ago, yes, they *is* somethin' you can do for me, Skeeter,"

Henry continued, with deep feeling. "I wouldn't ask you if I didn't know you to be trustworthy—"

"If I have the time, Mr. Hooghtyling; you know they's a lot to be done around the barns between trains; and when a rig's in such bad shape as this old shebang—" began Skeeter, getting an anchor planted to windward.

Henry interrupted: "'Twon't take you twenty minutes, boy—leastwise, not more'n twenty. 'Tain't the time—it's the responsibility. Now, what I want you to do, and I'm more'n willin' to pay you well for doin' it, too—is, I want you to go up to the Klings'."

He stopped, ponderously considering.

"Yes, sir?" Skeeter encouraged him. Skeeter showed every sign of having forgotten his anchor to windward, of being anxious to fly with the wind, wither-soever it listed.

"And ask for Miss Clotilde Westerhook."

Another silence. Skeeter ventured, almost worshipfully: "It's Westbrook—if you'll excuse me, Mr. Hooghtyling—ain't it?"

"How'd you know?" demanded Henry, boring into Skeeter's ingenuous Irish countenance with two-eyefuls of rheumy Dutch phlegm.

"I—why—I just happened to see the name on her suitcase—when I brought her out yestiddy, you know," explained Skeeter, terribly perturbed. "It was on one o' them little leather tags, with a card into it—you know—like a good many o' the artusses has."

"Seems to me you been lookin' pretty close—pretty close," returned Henry, and retired into a grimness of silence that might have been construed as paternal. "Gid-ap!" growled Skeeter huskily at the two ancient

and ambling nags. He was fiery-red as to both cheeks, disorganized completely as to eyes and mouth.

"Take it from me, who's lived a lot longer than you, boy, and maybe seen more—yes, maybe seen a leetle *bit* more," said Henry, "and don't let your desires go strayin' in that direction, Skeeter. Stick to the village girls and let the artusses alone." There was a gentleness in his voice, a surety and an ominousness, that held the youth spellbound, amazed, by the old man's penetration.

Henry, without even looking at him, understood. In a way perhaps related to his ability to locate underground springs, and to foretell a storm two days ahead of time, rather through some direct and subtle channel than through anything Skeeter had said or done, he had penetrated to Skeeter's emotions. His ability to locate well-sites and to foretell storms was not infallible; but his mistakes were more than counterbalanced by his astonishing successes; and, in Skeeter's case, he knew that he had surmised true.

"No, sir, it don't pay for plain folks like you and me, Skeeter, to get mixed up with artusses, except in the common run o' business and a noddin' acquaintance," he continued gravely. "Not but what Miss Westbrook don't appear to be a fine girl. But the finer they are, the more a fellow had ought to watch out. Your own father'd tell you the same if he was alive; and you'd listen to him respectful and quiet, just like you're listenin' to me—because you got some nat'r'l respect for age and experience—and then go and do just as you've a mind to," finished Henry, with swift tartness. "Well—go ahead! Folks got to pay for their schoolin' in this world."

Skeeter laughed foolishly, admiringly. Henry proceeded: "Young men got to learn, and they most gin'ly pay for their schoolin', too. Free advice don't git 'em nowhere. I might as well a-kep' quiet for all the good it'll do." He paused; Skeeter's silence indicated assent; he continued: "Now, as I was sayin', I want you to go up to the Klings'."

"Yes, sir!" Skeeter was made vocal by that, at any rate.

"And ask for Miss Clotilde Westbrook."

"Yes, sir!"

"And when you git her alone—kinda bow her out onto the porch, or something, lookin' kinda important, secret, you know—for it had ought to be alone, Skeeter."

"Yes, sir!"

"And when you get her alone, just say: 'Mr. Hooghty-tyling sent me to tell you he particular wants to see you before you decide definite about anything.' Just say that."

"Yes, sir!"

"You needn't mention the wash, though that's what I refer to. Just say what I told you, then say: 'In order to save you climbin' that old hill again, Mr. Hooghty-tyling 'll be waitin' round the corner o' the road by the Brookses' lower pasture, 'bout half a mile from the village, any time from one to four o'clock. He hopes you'll be *reasonable*, and not start *nawthin'* till you see him.' Now, then, can you remember all that? Because they ain't a word of it but what's important!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Well, let's hear you say it over."

Skeeter repeated it almost word for word. Henry

was surprised and gratified; he shrewdly suspected the cause of Skeeter's sharpened memory. "That's good," he said; "I guess the person you're goin' to say it to's had something to do with how much notice you've took of it. Maybe, for your own sake, I'd ought to send somebody else.—You want to 'member specially those two words—*reasonable*, and not to start *nawthin'*. Now—" Henry made a great show of putting his hand in his pocket. "How much do I owe you for that little errant?"

"Nothin' at all, Mr. Hooghtyling—glad to do it to oblige a customer!" said Skeeter. "'*Reasonable*' and 'not to start *nawthin'*!' Well, from all I saw of her, Mr. Hooghtyling, she looked reasonable. I bet you get that wash, all right."

"Um—ye-es," admitted Henry. "Maybe I'll get that wash, and maybe she looked reasonable. But you can't always tell, Skeeter, from the looks of a frog, how fur it'll jump."

Skeeter agreed, with an exhilarated chuckle, that you couldn't. It seemed wildly incongruous to compare Clotilde to a frog. Clotilde—stars—wild roses—

"It's just simply downright dead impossible!" asseverated Henry Hooghtyling, grim as a country judge. And yet, at bottom, he wasn't so grim because of that. Wilfulness, sudden headstrong whims and fancies—a girl's will, even more than a boy's, it may be, is the wind's will. He thought of her mother, of old, far-off, unhappy, happy, and heart-catching things.

The stage was uninterestingly empty to such artusses and village folk as happened to notice it as it rattled precariously up toward the Inn; a withered old farmer,

in ill-fitting black "city" clothes, bowed moodily forward, corded brown hands on his skinny knees, sat beside the semi-comatose, bowed, vacant-eyed country youth who held the lines. Stolid, humble, casual to innocuousness were horses, rig, driver, and sole passenger; and yet never argosy made port more richly laden with the gold of romance, the pale yellow gold of old memories and the bright red gleaming gold of young hopes, with spices from Araby, and costly bales.

## CHAPTER VI

TRUTH, AFTER MUCH KNOCKING ABOUT, IS WEL-COME BY AN ULTRA-MODERN YOUNG MAN—ALTHOUGH NOT, PERHAPS, FOR HER OWN UNADULTERATED SAKE

WHEN Skeeter knocked at the front door of the Klings' bungalow, at one-thirty that afternoon, after delaying in order to give Clotilde time for luncheon as well as to give himself time for a hardly necessary shave and a general "dolling up" that might have been considered more necessary, Clotilde didn't hear him.

At the time of his knock she was standing in the Klings' living-room, alone except for the immediate proximity of Mr. Carey Beemis. At the precise instant when Skeeter's first palpitating knock came on the upper half of the big divided Dutch door, not ten feet from her ear, Clotilde was saying: "When I admitted that I had no *moral* objections to your making love to me, I meant to infer that I might have other objections quite as valid. Please take your arm away."

"Paradise Lost!" murmured Mr. Beemis, half-way obeying, looking so brightly, boyishly, drolly forlorn that it would have been impossible for any woman with a trace of the mother-instinct to be too hard on him.

Clotilde protested: "If only you weren't so stupid about some things—you're just like all the old G. V. crowd—it's sex, sex, sex! After all I've told you, after

you've shown such fine sympathy and understanding—I should have thought you'd understand that, sexually, I'm a clam, now, and expect to be till things settle down."

Nevertheless, her cheeks were flushed a little, her eyes soft and dewy, and shining like dark agates in the half-light of the dark-walled, blue-curtained living-room. No tea-rose could have displayed more alluring nuances of shade and texture than her face. With her hair coiled carelessly, old-fashionedly, on the top of her head, with dark ringlets brushing the old ivory and rose pink of her cheeks, the milky whiteness of her neck, with all her slim young perfection extolled by her princess morning gown of Chinese-blue silk crêpe—What a flower for any man's fingers she was! As with flowers, as with the lady-moth, her time of full perfection had come; and no man with blood in his veins could have looked at her unmoved, however much any thoughtful man might have considered proprieties before obeying unavoidable impulses.

Mr. Carey Beemis, being a professional despiser of proprieties, bent suddenly forward and kissed her on the nearest cheek.

Her right hand flew upward to strike, to push him away. He caught the hand, with considerable skill, before it could do any damage.

"Oh, you cheap—disgusting—" She struggled to free her hand, she was radiantly furious. With immediate wisdom in such matters, he released her hand at once, and stood humbly adoring her. "I ought to have let you—slap me," he mourned, dulcet as a nightingale plucked by the thorn of a wayward rose. "I will, if you want to—I suppose I deserve it. There—" He

turned his perfectly shaven, toilet-watered, and powdered cheek toward her.

She accepted the offer without a second's hesitation, with vigor, vim, and a free-armed sweep surprising in a young lady of such refined appearance. Her cupped hand shouted "Plop!", a joyously abandoned "Plop!" as its considerable momentum was arrested by Mr. Beemis' outstretched face.

His arms jerked upward, his mouth and eyes flew wide open, as if he had been a jumping-jack, with every member responsive to a single string. "Great—guns!" he gasped, backing out of range, completely out of character, but preserving a laudable self-possession that enabled him to see some humor in the situation. "Say, that was a good one!" He got out a handkerchief, bordered in the same delicate shade of tan that appeared in his necktie, and mopped the eye nearest the spot that, in conjunction with Clotilde's hand, had produced the "Plop!"

"Say, you know," he confided to her, grinning, showing a lively impersonal interest—it was one of his most engaging characteristics that he could be so purely impersonal about very personal, even painfully personal matters: "I suppose I've offered my damask cheek like that, under precisely similar circumstances, to at least fifty ladies in the course of my scant twelve years of philandering—and you're the first that ever had the good sense to take me up!" His large, intelligent gray eyes beamed self-forgetful appreciation of her; his assaulted cheek had turned the color of a poinsettia, with brilliant rays, suggestive of the flared petals of a poinsettia, extending outward from the central eruption, but he dis-

regarded all that. "Just the same, Clotilde, dear—pardon me, I mean my dear Miss Westbrook—pardon me again, Miss Hooghtyling—just the same, I fear you've spoiled one of my most effective parlor tricks. I don't suppose I shall ever be able to pull that stuff again—at least not with the same abandon—and it was the abandon that always put it over. Another of my youthful illusions gone to the scrap-heap! Well—such is life!"

He sat down opposite her, calm, ratiocinative, quietly dignified and immaculate from soul and emotions to gray Scotch tweeds, high-collared white flannel shirt, and tan necktie. Quietly he crossed one gray-green stockinged calf over the other, with a delicate thumb and forefinger he loosened his knickerbockers over each shapely knee, so signifying that he was aware of Clotilde's exasperated scrutiny, and invited it. Neither inside nor out, his chirikily smiling young face announced, was he anything but such a young man as might be a fit object for a lady's approbation.

Both in his frankness, his outspoken interest in the intellectual side of matters naturally interesting to a young, under-married male, in short in his devotion to Truth, and in many other details, he was an intensely Modern young man. The Modern young woman had evoked him. He was nature's immediate response to an innovation. If, in all details, he was not admirable, he had the well-grounded excuse, discovered by Francis Bacon, that nature's immediate responses to innovations are often mistakes, "misshapen and ugly as the young of animals."

And yet there was certainly nothing ugly nor mis-

shapen in so much of his person as was exposed to the common gaze. His forehead was high, square, shapely, crowned with wavy dark hair brushed straight back in the European fashion. His nose, his mouth, his chin, might have been drawn by any of the most popular illustrators of young American heroes as expounded by magazine fiction. His chin was especially noticeable, long, square, delicately modeled, such a slightly exaggerated chin as is the glory of young gentlemen in all-star fiction numbers, and suggests to the initiated rather more weakness of moral fiber than would be suggested by no chin at all.

His eyes somewhat redeemed him from being a purely stereotyped personification of young-manly virtue as popularly made manifest in illustrational art. They were large, rather prominent in spite of the excellent depth of brow above them, bold, roving, temeritous, always holding a gleam of ironical dare-deviltry in their dark gray depths—a gleam that Edna Kling had described as suggesting that he was always on his way to a party. Youth was even more a continuous Mardi Gras to him than to most young persons of his type and social station; particularly he reveled in Modern Truth, especially those elements expounded by Max Stirner, Freud, Nietzsche, and other Germans, and in putting them into practice. In his make-up there was more than a little of that physique of an athlete in combination with the conscience of a tiger which Goethe, Nietzsche, and others have recommended as the basic ingredient of a man fitted to get the most out of life.

Greenwich Village, the Washington Square section of New York City, where Modernistic young women fore-

gathered to learn of Modernism, had nurtured his youth and helped to make him what he was. In that far-advanced, rather riotous and always revelsome atmosphere, he had lived and revelled, writing a little for radical magazines, getting on very nicely, thanks to a considerable inherited income and an eye for naked Truth. He preached Ultra-Modernism in the cafés and restaurants, and practised the most personally enjoyable of its tenets in the flats, clubs, and hotels thereabouts. The coming of the war, especially its spread to America, had been a shock to him, as to many of his co-workers, because it removed public attention from the reforms which he gained a pleasant sense of importance by preaching, no less than much pleasure and profit by practising. The war was an intrusion.

With most of the other Radicals, he denied the war's importance. It was a nasty brawl, without deep basic ideas; and its greatest danger was that it would distract attention from the Radical reforms which he and his brothers and sisters, whether in New York, Chicago, or San Francisco, were inaugurating. He wrote articles with such titles as "This Most Uninteresting War," and joined such publications as "The Masses," "The Seven Arts," "Mother Earth," and "Bull," in belittling the archaic brutality that, starting in an obscure corner of Europe, threatened to take even America's attention away from the propaganda of Truth and Freedom—of Truth and Freedom in sex relations, in work, in speech, in clothes, in apartment dwellings, in schools, in churches, in industrial relations, in everything. They were too much excited about their threatened estate to admit, for a moment, that he who saveth his Truth and Freedom

might lose them, or that he who loseth might find. When, in spite of the war, as they argued, woman suffrage was granted in New York State, they were briefly exhilarated, and lastingly cast down; for so many faint-hearts considered votes-for-women an end in itself, as if it had been more than the first step toward true Freedom for women—and for Radical men.

As the war showed a distressing tendency to spread in spite of their vocal objections, Modernistic Pacifism fell roughly into talkative and silent divisions. The silent group, to which Clotilde belonged, turned their backs on the war, and gave the world up to it, the flesh, and the Devil. The talkative group, of bolder, more neurotic, or more outraged spirits, turned their attention to fighting America's participation on the ground that the Germans were no worse than the Allies. This was Mr. Beemis' faction.

Its members were accustomed to announce, with great meaning, that they weren't so *sure* that the Kaiser was *altogether* responsible, and rest darkly important, as if it made a large amount of present difference whether the Kaiser, Edward Gray, or the Akound of Swat started the German war-machine to making German sausage of as many neutral and possibly inimical peoples as it seemed capable of handling at one time. They could prove, not only that Wilson had contradicted himself, but that Charles Schwab had plotted with Kitchener, and that K. of K. had shot down a stenographer who overheard the conversation—surely an offset to the murder of Edith Cavell. They classed all upholding of the Allies with the remarkable ex-cathedra sanctification of Germany's morals and motives, given out by Professors Haeckel,

Eucken, and other inspired leaders of German thought; and they laughed at the notion that long deprivation of Truth and Freedom, together with much feeding on the paternal pap of Verbotens and doctored news and doctored history and militaristic education dispensed from God by a mediæval Kaiser and Junkerdom—that stuffing with all of Radicalism's most hated poisons, and deprivation of most of Radicalism's healing floods—might have made the Germans a mentally inferior and beastly dangerous people.

They talked, with the gravity of a precocious nonage, of capitalistic forces in the United States, of Wall Street, and British influences, while the rest of the world was worrying over epidemic Hell and the best way of abating it. In the midst of an America frankly up in the air after trying to comprehend, for three years, and under large difficulties, perhaps the greatest event in world-history, they took to themselves an air of disgusted and erudite omniscience; for they had private sources of information, news of disasters and influences not at the command of the nation's wise men; and their air of infantile cocksureness was increased by the amazement their bland revelations-of-large-improbabilities-unto-babes aroused in their war-worried acquaintances. They added some humor to the situation, of course, and they would have added more if their Anti-Truth-and-Freedom-ism had not been so dangerous a thing.

When not elucidating the war, they went about their business of enlightenment and adventure chiefly on the sexual plane, since Radicalism demanding larger co-operation seemed, for the moment, to be shelved. Clotilde had been glad to leave this somewhat narrowed and

degenerate Modernism for a bit of enlightenment and adventure not on the sexual plane. Mr. Carey Beemis, not so blessed, had sought her co-operation along more conventionally radical lines. Their disagreement resulted from the fact that Clotilde desired co-operation in establishing the Truth as between free fathers and free daughters, rather than as between free men and women.

Her disappointment was the more acute because Mr. Beemis had begun by showing every evidence of being interested, thoroughly and solely, in her own problem. He had warmed to the first hint of it, which had not altogether escaped him even in his joy at meeting her, that hint she had let fall in wishing that Edna had introduced her by her real name, something or other that he didn't catch.

Later in the same evening, after the general atmosphere had recovered from the shock created by Edna's thoughtful linking of him with Miss Helen Hope, he had gravitated toward Clotilde and resurrected the hint:

"What was Edna getting at, anyway, in hesitating over your name? I hope it doesn't mean you've entered the holy bonds?"

"No, it doesn't," Clotilde told him decidedly; adding, with that devotion to the naked truth characteristic of her *milieu* and herself: "It meant merely that I'd discovered that Mr. Westbrook wasn't my real father—that my name wasn't really Westbrook."

"Why, how perfectly charming!" There was something gossipy and ladylike about his interest, as, indeed, there was about all of him, a possible result of the fact that all of his intimate and vital associations had been with women.

"I hadn't thought of it as charming, exactly." She was far less ladylike than he was.

He explained: "Of course it would depend on the—the discovered ancestry, wouldn't it? But I referred rather to your deliciously frank and simple way of announcing it. There really *is* something new under the sun, you know—you can't get around it! Such a cool, simple, altogether sensible treatment of such a theme, by a girl of your age, would have been utterly impossible twenty—yes, even ten years ago. Utterly impossible!"

"I suppose it would," admitted Clotilde, rather bored; she, on the other hand, preferred men to women confidants. Mr. Beemis, cleverly inferring from her air that less persiflage would be welcome, continued: "I suppose I'm showing my ignorance even to mention it; but the world, you know, still contains a good many antediluvian ideas and attitudes."

"It certainly does!" Clotilde warmed up a little. "It seems I can't even tell the truth, the undiscreditable truth, about my ancestry without stirring everybody up."

"Ridiculous!"

"As if it weren't as creditable to be born illegitimate as legitimate—or more creditable, if one overcomes the handicap." She was watching him out of the corner of her eyes for signs of shock; he revealed only pleased surprise and approbation. "As if," she continued, with a rising opinion of his attitude toward the truth, "the pronunciation of a few stale and foolish vows could make any difference!"

He nodded gravely. "But you must remember that, even though all this seems the veriest platitudes to us, it might be capable of conveying quite a shock to mediæval

minds, of which the world is full." He was quietly contemplative, genial, tolerant even of mediæval error. "At any rate, there's a certain stimulation in recognizing one's superiority to one's temporal atmosphere, isn't there? Looking down on the *zeit-geist*, you know—reminds me of my college Latin, and good old Lucretius. For Modernity, go to the old Greeks!"

He said it rather loudly. "Hear, hear!" commented Edna, from the other side of the room; she had been displaying signs of nervousness, and so had Miss Hope, ever since Carey got Clotilde in a corner. "Come over here, you two, and tell us all about Modernity and the old Greeks!"

"Oh, that's Carey's hobby," put in Miss Hope, asserting her intimacy with Carey's hobbies.

"Come tell us about it!" insisted Edna, to Carey.

"I go—to defend my assailed hobby!" Carey replied to the group, rising as Clotilde rose. To Clotilde he murmured: "I'd like awfully to talk over that matter with you—sometime when you're at liberty." And Clotilde replied: "I'd like to have you. You're the first person I've met lately who hasn't been shocked silly by a little plain speaking."

Clotilde had been more or less at liberty the next morning, after eleven o'clock. The Klings had gone out to lunch, while she preferred to remain in the bungalow to write a letter to her mother, recording progress—or the lack of it. Mr. Beemis cleverly discovered the fact of Clotilde's solitude in the course of a conversation at the regular mid-morning post-office gathering, when Skeeter delivered the mail from West Beacon. "I could bite my tongue out for letting him worm that

out of me!" Edna told Arthur as Carey lightsomely departed.

"Why—I guess Clotilde can take care of herself," hazarded Arthur, with his habitual vague surprise at Edna's remarks.

"It isn't that, you goose! She's *perfectly* capable of taking care of herself—for all her wild talk. I'm thinking of *my-self*. Helen Hope's stock of conniptions is the most violent and wearing on the nerves of any I've ever associated with, and I'm simply not up to the job of nursing her through a fresh series! The next time she comes into my kitchen and wants to cut her throat with my bread-knife, I shall request her to take the knife along and mess up her own kitchen—I have too much trouble keeping mine in order as it is!"

Arthur protested weakly: "Really, dear, I don't think you ought to joke about—"

"It's no *joke*—it would be just like her to *do* it!" Edna shot in.

Before Arthur had time to rid his gentle soul of the real concern these threatened difficulties caused him, exaggerated though he suspected them to be, Mr. Carey Beemis' athletic legs had hurried him up the half-mile of road, along the footpath through a hundred yards of meadow, and up over the little rocky crag to the Klings' door.

The door was open, and Clotilde, half-coiffured, dressed in the morning negligee of Chinese-blue silk crêpe, was discovered writing her letter.

"Oh, hello!" announced Mr. Beemis, in a way that made it rather an admiring comment than a greeting, and sauntered inside. "Hope I'm not disturbing you?"

He came toward her, forcing her to leave her writing, by the very imposing sprightliness of himself and his clothes keeping her attention. "Just heard from Edna you'd been deserted up here—thought I'd just run up and invite you down to luncheon at the Inn—it isn't half bad, really."

"Why—I'm writing a letter," Clotilde told him, rather stupidly.

"It's a shame to be writing a letter on a morning like this—even a letter to France!" he protested, debonair, lightly throwing out a bait.

"To France?" she repeated, still with half her mind on the important and rather hectic matters she had been detailing to Mrs. Emily Westbrook, Alvaredo Street, San Francisco.

"Excuse my presumption—just fancied you might be writing—" At least he had her full attention, now, and he made the most of it. "—to someone getting a little poetical inspiration out of the squabble over there. You see, I'm unmannerly frank—it's always getting me into hot water!"

"Oh, you mean Clement Townes, I suppose?" Clotilde was casual to the point of boredom. "No, I haven't heard from him since he went over, and I hardly expect to. He went into the ambulance service, didn't he?"

"Yes—at first—and I sometimes wish I'd gone, too." He sat down and went on, with only a suppressed sigh and a melancholy grimace by way of explanation for the wish. "I daresay it was nothing but the desire for copy that sent him into the Lafayette Escadrille. His hurrah-for-war letters in the New York *Tribune* sound

pretty hollow—not but that he writes well, but it's rather sickening to see him going back on First Principles. S'pose you've seen some of 'em?"

"I don't read anything that touches, however lightly, on the war," said Clotilde, repeating a formula. Nevertheless, she considered the matter of Clement Townes. "What is the Lafayette Escadrille?" she asked.

"An aviation squad, backed by a lot of wealthy militarists in New York. It supplies an outlet for the intrepid and useless sons of the idle rich who've got tired of hunting rabbits and ducks. Young brutes! Townes is pretty soft putty if he's allowed his head to be turned by association with them. He went abroad, in the first place, to escape the draft—and to preach sedition among the wounded—at least, that's what he said. Lively brand of sedition he's been preaching in the war-crazy old *Trib!* He won't have a friend in the Village when he gets back—mark my words!"

Mr. Beemis, being a member of the Modernistic-Pacificistic clique that was still trying to talk the war out of existence, was pardonably bitter. Clotilde, never having been much interested in the war except to despise it, commented neither one way nor the other. What was it to her that the erstwhile mincing poet of the lines to eyebrows and eyes felinely luminous in the dark had turned renegade to Radicalism—and to his ambulance corps? He had been gone eight months. In the press of later matters and adorers, she had practically forgotten him.

"Excuse me, Mr. Beemis—but I really must finish my letter to my mother," she said.

"Oh, pardons—I'm a brute!" He rose with alacrity,

but paused, like a departing feminine guest, for further gossip. "You know, it was just what you said to me last evening—I've been thinking of your situation—what a lot of hard knocks you must have got, and will get, if you're as frank to everyone as you were to me!"

"Yes—I have got some knocks—and pushes," admitted Clotilde.

"It's diabolically hard to put a thing like that over, but the world is the better for every such thing that is put over," he declared.

Clotilde nodded: "That's what I think—and what I've said."

Mr. Beemis sat down again. "It really needs more heads than one. A group can put over a thing like that, and make it count, better than an individual. I believe in group-action."

"Well—I tried to start group-action up here by telling Edna, but—"

"Yes—she distinctly isn't Modern, as much as she pretends to be. For a typical, old-fashioned married régime, look at her and poor Arthur. She leads him around by the nose—by Jove, she even makes him go with her to make conventional calls, leave conventional little cards, you know!" Mr. Beemis edged his chair six inches nearer. "Now, the simple truth you want to put over is that you're not—not conventionally born, and you're glad of it. Isn't that it?"

"Partly." Clotilde hesitated. It had been easier to explain the exact situation to Edna, in spite of Mr. Beemis' more advanced views. "The simple fact is, I think I'm entitled to a father—to my father. I'd like

to live with him six months of the year, and with mother the other six. Mother and I would be better for it—and father and I would be much better. He has much that I need—and I certainly could do a lot for him. It's ridiculous that everything can't be treated quite sensibly and openly—my mother agrees with me, and has given her consent, but my father objects, and Edna has violent hysterics—”

“ Merciful Heavens—was that all that sent her off last evening?” Mr. Beemis, in disgusted horror, edged his chair a good ten inches nearer. He swayed toward Clotilde, ballasted with sympathetic indignation. “ Why, my dear, just let me explain matters to a few intelligent beings, here and in the Village, and it can be arranged without any fuss or feathers, I’m sure. Edna is mediæval, simply mediæval. A hang-over from the Dark Ages. Believe *me*, I’ve suffered from her antiquated views *myself!*” he finished darkly.

But Clotilde was self-centeredly considering her own problem. “ At least I think—you might help me clear the way a little.” She pondered, and her eyes narrowed as, in the course of her ponderings, she came across a distinct vision of Ethel. “ I want to see my father again—I’ve already seen him, for a short time, but we were interrupted. He’s a poor, broken-down farmer, running a discouraged farm on the mountain—”

“ Oh, really?” Mr. Beemis beamed. “ Say, it gets better and better!”

“ Yes. I couldn’t have chosen better if I’d had a chance. There’s good old Dutch blood in his veins, too—not that ancestry matters half as much as environment—”

"Oh, but it matters a good deal! We have only to think of race horses—"

Clotilde pursued the main event: "Well, I want to see him soon—alone. Now, if you'd just go up to his farm some time this afternoon, and get word to him that I want to talk to him—first making sure that his wife is not within hearing distance—"

"I shall be delighted to do it! Then—the plot thickens—he has a wife?"

"Thank you so much! Yes, he has a wife, and she's more mediæval, I fancy, than Edna ever thought of being. Just tell him to come right down here—or I'll send a rig up for him, if he'd rather. There—I'm glad to get that off my mind!"

Clotilde rose, gravitated toward the door. "I was thinking of getting the stage-boy, or someone else, to carry a message up for me, but you'll handle it much more cleverly, I'm sure."

Mr. Beemis, also, arose, but he did not fulfil Clotilde's evident expectation that he would accompany her to the door and depart on her errand. He paused, holding his Alpine hat in both hands at the level of his midriff, looking down at his neat tan walking boots. "Yes, Edna's rather—mediæval," he observed. Clotilde faced around; he looked at her with frank, serious, saddened gray eyes. "I admit, Miss Westbrook—"

"After this, I think you may call me by my real name—Miss Hooghtyling," she said, so immersed in her own problem that she was able to think of a detail like that even in the presence of the confession that was plainly struggling up for utterance from the

depths of Mr. Beemis. "I don't care for the connotations of Westbrook—and I have a right to my real name."

"Yes—certainly—Miss Hooghtyling," he said, distracted but not deterred; "I agree with you—the Dutch before the English always. But I was going to say that, in seeing you last evening, not only had I been inspired with the idea that I might help you, but that you—might possibly—consent to help me, also."

Clotilde waited blankly, a trifle impatiently. The tacking of a condition onto the doing of a favor was singularly unsuited to the frank, helpful, self-forgetful character that Mr. Beemis had displayed. She caught a glimpse of his egotism, as he had already caught several glimpses of hers. "The fact is," he went on, now that she had stopped, coming closer to her, "things are going to break up with me, pretty soon—and the report Edna's going to spread of it will be damnable—mediæval and damnable!"

Clotilde said, "I don't exactly understand." And she didn't exactly, but she did almost.

"Oh, I mean—Miss Hope." He threw out the name with as much frankness as if it had been an old pipe which he was not ashamed of, even if it had grown stale, no longer suited to his taste. "She's a wonderfully fine girl—a *wonderfully* fine girl, Miss Hooghtyling! No one realizes that—no one has had a better reason to realize that, than myself. But, when proven incompatibility—absolutely tested and proven—" He paused. "I suppose, before I made this revelation, I should have assured myself that you have the Modern

view of the freedom of the sexes?" he asked, raising his eyebrows a little, putting the question as if it had been a test of ordinary sanity.

Clotilde admitted the formula. "I do." It was a forced confession. She was wondering about Helen Hope.

"So do others—in theory—but, now that it's come to a plain matter of fact, of action-determining fact—well, one must go slow. Edna, by putting a false interpretation on my actions, a mediæval, twisted, till-death-it-do-them-part interpretation—of which she's quite capable, I assure you,—can make things miserable for me, for both of us. Now, in the interest of Truth, of Modernism, I ask you to become acquainted with the facts—and to spread the truth about them—by way of counterblast to Edna's false report—that's all. And I put the request not only on the basis of my own self-interest, but on the basis of the effect a false interpretation will have on society at large. We are facing dangers of reaction. Freedom, as between men and women, is basic—it must be practised as well as preached, now as never before. I ask only my freedom—freedom to work, to love, to live—is that too much for a man to ask in this day and generation?"

"Not on the face of it," said Clotilde, with some coolness. There were all the old formulas, even if grown a little dusty since the war turned public attention elsewhere: all the old formulas, and expressed very well, too. She had agreed to them, every really Modern young woman had agreed to them, a hundred times. And yet she was hesitant, half-disgusted. That was largely because, she decided with a good deal of insight, Mr.

Beemis was taking up so much time on his own problem while hers needed her undivided attention—as well as part of his attention.

At any rate, he had given the countersign, recited the creed, and she had given her allegiance to the creed. "Of course," she said, "if women are going to break the old bonds, they must bear the responsibility that goes with breaking them."

"Pre-cisely!" He was almost devout in admiration of that ancient and platitudinous formula, more than devout in his admiration of her. She stood tall and straight, calm-faced as some modern Portia giving judgment. If she had been gowned and coiffured to fit the part, she might have carried it off; but the clinging morning gown of delicate blue silk, the disarray of hair, so entirely and distractingly feminine, surrounded her with an aura that charmed away the Portia-character of her face. She had no idea that she was rather a personified love-appeal than a just judge; she felt for Helen Hope, for thousands of Helen Hopes, past, present, and to be, and yet Truth was Truth, Modernity was Modernity. Modernity's newest man-child devoured her with his eyes.

"You, for instance—" he began, hesitated, took a fresh start: "In place of the woman, nowadays, the man is far oftener considered to emerge stained, disgraced, from an affair of this sort. The woman is welcomed everywhere, pitied, praised for her devotion to her ideals; while the man—well, he's dishonored, or considered to be dishonored, in precisely the same way the woman used to be. Times have changed with a vengeance! Girl after girl gets respectably married after a free-love affair

—it's becoming almost something to be proud of, a sign of eligibility for a proper old-fashioned marriage—but the man—especially if he breaks it off—why, actually, I've known good Modernists who wouldn't speak to a man after such a break—and the women, the very girls who preach sex-freedom loudest, will have nothing to do with him! I tell you, Modern men have suffered as much as Modern women, in this break with the past—perhaps they've suffered more!"

"Well—I hadn't thought of that side of it." She hadn't, and her voice said she was not particularly interested in thinking of it just then; as a matter of fact, she was more interested in Henry Hooghtyling, and Ethel, and herself, egotist that she was. But if her voice was cool, the curves of soft blue Chinese crêpe, the ringleted disarray of brown hair, the color in each rose-textured cheek, contained warmth enough for any half-susceptible heart.

"You, for instance," repeated Beemis; "wouldn't you feel an objection, essentially a moral objection, to receiving the attentions of a man—Oh, let's be frank, for I think we can be!—wouldn't you feel a really *moral* objection to having a man like myself love you?"

"I would *not*." Her voice was repellent as a thistle, but nearly all the rest of her shrieked an unconscious invitation. With sudden fire in his eyes, Mr. Beemis stepped close to her, put his arm around her waist, stared down at her with all the hypnotic intensity of a large, well-schooled masculine desire. It was during this interval that Skeeter, having made his way across the porch like a second-story man for softness, perspiring

expectation and awe at every pore, reached the front door and palpitatingly, softly, knocked.

He heard scraps of the ensuing conversation, from the "Please take your arm away," through the "Plop!", down to Mr. Beemis' philosophical, "Well—such is life!" without being able to move a muscle. He thought, once, of running away; he thought, twice, of entering and endeavoring to "beat up" Mr. Carey Beemis; when silence fell again, due to the fact that Mr. Beemis had settled himself for inspection, he knocked with boldness and decision. He had kept his head, and he felt much better for having kept it.

Clotilde came to the door. Even in the face of the vision of aroused loveliness that she presented, a vision that discounted his rosiest advance dream of what it might be, he lost not one jot nor tittle of his head.

"Excuse me," he said, demonstrating ease by a friendly smile, "but I was sent up here with a message for you. Maybe we better go over to the end of the porch there, while I tell you. I was told not to go blubbin' it around."

She accompanied him to a distant corner of the verandah, and heard his creditable paraphrase of Mr. Hooghtyling's message. "That's fine!" she said. "I'll go right up. Thank you so much.—But wait just a minute—I want to get you something as a token of my appreciation, you know."

"Nothing—I won't take nothing for doing this errant," Skeeter objected, waving a liberal hand, showing his state of her most humble retainer only in

devotional blue eyes. "I was glad to do it—more'n glad, believe me!"

Still he lingered, quite as unable to tear himself away as Mr. Beemis had been; and yet it was a politer, more natural and humble lingering. In his best pepper-and-salt suit and white collar, he attained a high level of gentlemanly politeness, as well as of pinkness, freshness, the wholesome vigor of a self-respecting, diligent country stripling. Clotilde decided abruptly: "I'd be glad if you'd wait here a few minutes till I dress, and walk up with me—you could show me the place, you know. That is, if you have time?"

"Yes'm—got lots o' time—glad to do it!" said Skeeter fervently.

While she returned into the house, he sat down on a corner of the porch and made a point of hearing nothing whatever, as much as he would have enjoyed to hear; his mind was relieved of some misgivings when, a moment later, Mr. Carey Beemis sauntered cheerfully forth, glanced about with the pleased air of a young man at peace with himself and the world, nodded affably at Skeeter, and proceeded jauntily down the footpath that led to the road. A brilliant red blotch on one cheek, noticed with feelings akin to tumultuous joy by the stage-boy, was the only jarring note in all his complaisant well-being.

With animus that checked even a return nod, Skeeter watched him go, and breathed more easily when he had disappeared. His disappearance removed the only small cloud on all of Skeeter's horizon. He gave himself up to anticipations of his shining adventure, no less than a mile walk in company with the most

entrancingly attractive person in the world. What would she say to him, what should he say to her, while they—his heart thumped as a more sophisticated youth's might have thumped for an approaching bridal—while they “walked out” together? Skeeter speculated, and dreamed dreams.

## CHAPTER VII

A DETAIL, FOUNDED ON AN OLD ROMANCE, MODERNIZED AND IMPROVED BY MISS CLOTILDE HOOGHTYLING

"I DON'T believe I know your name yet," said Clotilde.

"My complete name's James G. Blaine Reilly, but mostly I get called 'Skeeter.'"

She found that as diverting as he had hoped she would. "Why 'Skeeter'?"

"Well, some on 'em said I was always buzzin' round lookin' for blood; I was consid'able of a fightin' character when I was a boy. Strange what boys will be up to."

"And what is your present advanced age?"

"You're right—I'm not so old." He had caught her ironical drift perfectly, to her surprise, but he showed no rancor. "I'm goin' on nineteen; but I may be beyont my years, what with workin' steady for the last seven-eight years."

"I'm sure you are—and you're Irish, too, aren't you?"

"My folks was. I guess I'm just plain American."

He said it with a certain ring on the "American." So the germs of Patriotism, Clotilde thought, had been carried by the winds of the world-war even to this shut-in corner of the earth. And yet Skeeter's Patriotism did not assault her nerves as the New York variety had begun to do. She remembered a huge sign at the entrance of a department store: "PATRIOTS! Carry

Your Bundles Home, and Help Your Country!" In the purer country air the disease could run its course without those sickening manifestations so common in the city. God would deliver Woodbridge sooner than many places of the recrudescence plague of sectionalism and its dirty off-scourings.

" My mother promised to sign my papers," announced Skeeter, whose mind, also, had followed his Patriotic " American " into warlike fields, " come the first o' next month, if I still want to go. She wouldn't sign 'em last fall, said I had to take six months to think it over. Your folks got to sign your papers if you're less'n twenty-one. I guess I'll be on my way in 'bout two weeks."

She checked the frank, flat arguments that rose to her lips; Henry Hooghtyling had taught her something of the devious mental processes, the shy naturalness, of the natives. She proceeded carefully: " Haven't you ever thought, James, that there might be something foolish about all this fighting? You said, a minute ago, that you used to fight when you were a boy, and you spoke as if you'd been foolish to do it. Suppose all this present brutal fighting has been started by a lot of overgrown, brutal, under-civilized boys? Mightn't it be foolish, all this enlisting, training?"

" They's a *lot* that's foolish about it!" She glanced at him with surprise for his violent agreement. " Why, you know what? They won't let a man enlist in the aviation corps 'thout he's had a college education. I call that foolish—and it ain't *democratic*, neither! Do you think it is?"

" No—no, it isn't." Clotilde was dashed, but amused; his patriotic quirk was like the quirks in his speech, his

clothes: she had heard of country flavor. "So, now you want to do your fighting from the sky?"

"Oh, boy!" agreed Skeeter, and was silent with pure emotion.

Perhaps the recent Modernist, Clement Townes, Clotilde meditated, might have felt some of that juvenile enthusiasm for sailing through the air and dropping ungentele things upon the ground beneath. Clement had always had a vein of the boy running through his sophistication—as most young men had. What boys they were, these men, with a boy's eagerness for a fight! She read in Skeeter's eager beardless face the history of the recent retrogression of the race.

"I s'pose you've got some friends in the army—near everybody has, nowadays," suggested Skeeter.

"No—not a friend." She would not increase Skeeter's youthful blood-thirst by telling him of Clement Townes, with the Lafayette squadron. Besides, Mr. Townes was no longer her friend.

Clement, sophisticated, rather mincing, rather girlish of mien and figure, a typical Modern youth somewhat resembling Mr. Carey Beemis, with all of Mr. Beemis' predilections toward modern love and kindred Modernisms—she had always rather despised him, even while forcing approbation for him on the ground of his Modernism. There had been something unholy, unnatural, about his attempt to make love to her. He had never seemed altogether a man: she had treated him much as if he had been a good girl friend. He had joined in her revels of new ideas and more substantial things, he had answered her unoccupied youth's great need for someone to play with. She smiled, remembering the

incident of his clipped name; he had signed himself, first, "John Clement Townes," then, "J. Clement Townes," and finally "Clement Townes," explaining that, by changing his name, he freshened himself up to himself, kept himself from being bored by constant association with his own personality. Even Modernistic revels, either because he was rusting for lack of something better to do or because he was good for nothing, even revelling, had not relieved his besetting boredom. She wondered if he found relief from it in flying a fighting airplane: and whether, if he did, that showed that he had finer, or baser inner metal than the still-modernizing Modernists. Would she feel any special regrets if he were shot down, or fell and broke his neck? Had he become more of a man over there? What sort of stuff was he writing for the *Tribune*? Had he really changed, or was his militaristic stuff merely—

"Quite a few from around here has gone," said Skeeter politely.

"They had to go—in the draft, I suppose," Clotilde countered.

"Well, some on 'em wanted to go, and some didn't," said Skeeter, "but they all went when they was called. And they was a lot o' foolishness 'bout that, too. They was one feller, fine a lad's ever you see, wanted to go, but he was over draft age, and the girl he was keepin' comp'ny with wouldn't let him volunteer. Well, one day he got drunk, and went over to Lake Katrine where they was doin' the examinin', and says to the doctor, 'I want to go to France.' The doctor says, 'We take no boozers.' 'I'll give you ten dollars, all I got, to send me over to France,' says the lad, pullin' out the money—but they

turned him out—wouldn't have him—said they didn't want no boozers and took a lot o' fellers not half the lad that lad is. And it was the first time he'd ever been drunk's fur's anybody remembered—he wasn't a boozier—he'd just got to thinkin' how maybe it was his duty, and got drunk because his girl wou—”

Skeeter's voice went dead, in the middle of a word; a slight accident was happening to Clotilde.

In turning a corner of the old dirt road, a blackberry shoot, grown long and supple and swaying out toward the open from its overcrowded copse, had fastened on the good holding surface offered by her pongee skirt; before she could stop, it had pulled backward and upward, lifting her skirt and the one silken petticoat decreed by fashion, lifting and tightening until both were level with her knees. Delicate blue silk, delicate curves surpassing those of the long petals of any blue iris of the Woodbridge valley, outlined the legs revealed to Skeeter's eyes.

Clotilde stopped, struggling with the accidental spray. Skeeter stopped also, as quietly, pallidly concerned as if he suspected the receipt of a sudden bullet-wound in some vital part. Only country-bred youth, unused to feminine limbs as plentitudinously revealed in theaters, restaurants, and at bathing beaches, could have experienced or understood the translation that was his. The world in general had grown accustomed to the fact that even women were bipeds; it was a spread of truth in line with the times, and it offered indubitable advantages to compensate for the lost piquancy of mystery; but no innocuous desuetude dulled the edge of Woodbridge Skeeter's surprise.

"Please hold the bush—bother it all!" fussed Clotilde, candidly unconscious that she was playing Sais unveiled to the gawking country youth. She got a suggestion of it as he stumbled over against the offending bush; a glance as his brick-red face, before he hastily averted it, gave her that. "It's a beastly bush!" she complained, getting her skirts free again, giving half an eye to appraisal of Skeeter. Skeeter did not even see that she was free until she told him, "All right—thank you!"

She began to get some of his emotion, vaguely to understand it. Was it possible that her little misadventure—what naïve, bucolic, interesting ignorance! She was surprised, amused, by his very freshness, callowness, the spontaneity and richness of his amatory instincts, her almost magical power over them—she smiled, flushed, was inspirited, releasing some of the inward tension that Mr. Beemis' large and conventional attack had created in her, even while she repelled it.

"I hope you weren't shocked!" she said, without intending to say it, without knowing why she said it, without knowing much except that she had been made peculiarly gay, buoyant, by her little mishap, and the grave country youth's reaction to it. Fundamentally, her attitude harmonized pretty well with his: much more than hers did, say, with Mr. Beemis', thorough virgin that she was in fact and subconsciously, however much her Modernism might have disprized virginity. Sex with her, also, beneath her wise words and her surprising intellectual grasp of it, was a thing of impalpable nuances, of tones and shades as undecipherable by her science, or by anybody else's, as a September iris—of mystery deeper

than any man's Truth, and of gently bubbling mush. She could no more keep from rallying Skeeter a little than a rose can keep from nodding its full-blown head in the wind. "I hope you weren't shocked?" she had said, and the truth about young women flowered more freely in the unintended faint archness of the words than in reams of her matter-of-fact deductions concerning sex in its relation to her.

Skeeter understood her universal language, saw that he was being rallied. Years of every-day dissimulation came to reinforce his natural wisdom of suppression in matters of young and tender emotions. "That was too bad," he announced, gruffly regretful; "it's the law everyone has to cut the bushes along the road in August; but Brooks always lets his go till October. Hope it didn't tear your dress?"

"Oh, no." She looked at him inquiringly as he tramped along, in stodgy indifference, at the other side of the road. Except for heightened color, fast fading to customary pinkness, and a scowl of regretful disgust, he was as calm as Mr. Hooghtyling's cucumber. With such an air he might have bargained for a motor-bus—or an airplane. He would have been quite ready to see the point if he had been told that certain cynics classified pretty ladies with these and other much-desired commodities, and recommended precisely his tactics in coming by all of them.

"Brooks could be fined for leavin' that bush there," he told her, as if the bush had caused him a grave personal annoyance.

She wondered at him. Had he really been exhilarated, or had he merely been shamed? Queer ideas of modesty

these country people had—a soured Puritanism that made shameful, sour, many of the most beautiful Truths of life. She remembered Edna's popular drawing-room story of the good old Woodbridge farm-wife who had said she never could have forgiven herself if her husband had ever seen her without any clothes on. There was less humor in that for Clotilde than protest against a mind so perverted. Did the callow youth at her side share a general Woodbridge repugnance for beauty when it was connected with sex—as nine-tenths of all discovered beauty this side of the heavens undoubtedly is? Had his glimpse been rare wine or shameful mid-road puddle water to him? Purely as an intellectual problem, she told herself, that was as interesting as any chapter of Forel.

But she was emotionally uninterested in intellectual problems just then. What a gold and green day it was —how the pure soft wind came rolling down over the shoulder of old blue Teyce Ten Eyck to northward! “What a day it is—there's nothing ragged or forlorn about September up in these old hills!” she said, rather to herself than to the dour and downcast Skeeter. “It's all fresh, and young, and beautiful—as ‘September Morn’!” She mentioned the title of a picture, popularized by Comstockian wrath, a picture of a young girl bathing. Why, she asked herself, should her mind run toward unclothedness? and had a reply ready in the well-exploited fact that all beauty, even the beauty of a September afternoon, keenly felt, is capable of turning the mind in that general direction. There was warrant enough for considering no landscape perfect without the glint of white limbs somewhere—

"It's a wonder!" admitted Skeeter, lifting his face to the bepraised day. His look lightened, lost its glumness and disgust. "It's sure a *wonder!*" he repeated, and took a breath of pure mountain air. "But, say, you ought to see it in October—all sorts of colors—nothin' but the woodbine's turned so far—it, and the sumach. There's some sumach over there."

He pointed out a cluster of the man-high, scarlet bushes in a field that slanted upward at their right. Dark green pines made a background for the gleaming mass. Clotilde paused to look. "That's good stuff!" she said, technically. "With those pines—I'd like to try to paint it—if I weren't so busy with other things." She stopped to look over the suggested subjects. "Other things *are* a bore this afternoon—rather," she confessed.

Skeeter, given a chance because she was turned more than half from him, looked at her intently. He did not devour her with his eyes, nor did any of him suggest devouring; he admired, he worshiped, he coveted. But it was a hopeless sort of coveting; so he had once stood among many and worshiped and coveted the airplane of an exhibition flier at the Onteora Fair. It had been hauled away, almost at once, to be shut from prying eyes in a barn; and Clotilde, he would be losing her in a few minutes, now. The Brooks' lower pasture, specified by Mr. Hooghtyling, was less than a quarter of a mile further on. He would have to leave her there, and go back to a singularly drab existence. Driving that old wreck of a stage, those two old wrecks of worn-out nags! If only he could go to something more worthy—to driving a motor-bus—or, better, into

the pomp and panoply of war! Merely looking at her strengthened all his ideals.

"I *will* paint that—just as soon as things settle down a little!" Clotilde promised herself, remembering her sometimes interesting handicraft. "It's full of meaning —those dark pines, and the flaming scarlet bushes—if I could put a girl in there, a girl with something of the same combination of colors in her soul—" She thought of Helen Hope. Or she might put in a clump of white birches, like slim white naked maidens of the wood—with the scarlet bushes flaming passion at their feet—the dark pines glooming doom beyond—

"I don't see—Mr. Hooghtyling nowhere," Skeeter announced, a little short of breath; he, also, had been doing some thinking. The wary cleverness of a young fox was in him, combined, heterogeneously active, along with the wisdom of his vast simplicity.

Clotilde was diverted: "Oh, was *this* the place where he was to be?"

Skeeter skilfully avoided the gin of a lie direct. "I don't see him," repeated Skeeter, looking hard at several places where Henry might have been expected not to be. "Maybe he hasn't come yet—maybe we could go up there and wait for him?"

"Yes—let's," agreed Clotilde, pleasantly undisappointed, it seemed to Skeeter, by Henry's absence. He helped her over the gray-brown remnants of a stone wall that had been upstanding and important when it enclosed a wheat field, some generations before, and they straggled up the hillside toward the sumachs and pines. "Perhaps we came too slowly—perhaps he's given up and gone home?" suggested Clotilde. They had come

slowly, partly because of her high-heeled slippers; she hadn't stopped to change those blue kid morning delicacies for more substantial gear.

"He said till round four o'clock—or maybe it was at four o'clock," Skeeter reassured her. "I don't entirely remember."

"Well, either way, then, we shan't miss him," she returned, and threw herself down on the short, gray-green herbage near the sumachs, a hundred yards from the old road and a hundred feet above it. The valley spread southwestward before them, variegated, gleaming, simmering in amber sunlight, wonderful. Skeeter dropped down some ten feet from her and embraced his knees with his arms; he had been at picnics in company with girls, though never with such a girl as this, and he adopted the conventional attitude.

"Do you know many of the artists around here?" asked Clotilde, after a few minutes of silence. It seemed proper to ask something.

"No. That is, they nod to me, and sometimes they talk to me when I'm drivin' 'em in or out; but I don't s'pose you'd call that knowin' 'em," said Skeeter.

"Oh, that's about as well as most people know each other, I fancy," Clotilde commented. Her toes were compressed by walking in her pumps; Skeeter was looking out over the Valley. She slipped the pumps off, and wiggled her toes in the freedom that they joined the rest of her in enjoying. They were well-trained, Modernistic, freedom-loving toes, for all they sometimes had to endure the prisoning of pumps. Lessons in the latest forms of barefoot dancing had trained them, together with her whole lithe body, in being proper Modern

members. She glanced at Skeeter. How completely horrified and dumbfounded he would be if he could be present at some of the lawn dances, performed by schools of barefooted, nymphishly underclad nymphs, so popular in Westchester and Long Island! He was a fine young barbarian, fresh from the fringes of civilization, a true and delightful "native."

She said, prying at his undoubtedly barbarous sartorial opinions: "Some of the artists wear queer clothes up here, don't they?"

Skeeter, grinning a little, agreed: "They sure do—and they get worse every year!"

"How worse?"

"Oh—every way."

"You don't mean they're not all—perfectly modest?"

He didn't seem to get that. "Well—" he hesitated.

"I mean they all wear *enough* clothes?" she explained.

"Well—yes, and *no*." He didn't look enlightened; his hesitation, Clotilde recognized, might have been because a question of modesty was involved.

"No?" said Clotilde.

"No," said Skeeter, staring at the landscape, disapproving as a proper young monk.

She was altogether pleasantly amused, diverted: "Well, how much clothes ought a person to wear?"

"They ought to wear *somethin'*!"

That was sufficiently prompt and to the point. "But, of course," objected Clotilde, "they all do!"

"No. Some of 'em don't wear *nawthin'*!"

"Oh, come! You don't mean that!" She had heard wild tales of the Woodbridge art colony, but nothing quite so wild as that.

"Yes, I do," insisted Skeeter quietly. "Over in the woods 'round Willowville, they go that way. Girls and women."

"Oh, the Plein Air Fellowship, of course!" She laughed. She had forgotten that association of artists whose announced program was "The painting of the nude in the open air." "But they're artists—and it's only the models who go *au naturel*."

Skeeter commented grimly: "Yes—they go natural, all right."

"But they're models—and, anyway, are all natural things ugly, bad?" protested Clotilde; she was both amused, and anxious to get at native views. "You don't think all natural things are wrong, do you?"

"Most of 'em."

"None of them!"

Glum Puritanism confronted exhilarated Modernism. "'Nothing that is according to nature is wrong,'" quoted exhilarated Modernism. "There, one of the wisest men that ever lived said that!"

"I don't care who said—" Skeeter reformed his manners. "Maybe I don't just get you—you mean a fellow had ought to do just what's natural for him—what he wants to?"

"Yes, just that. But, of course—"

"Then I don't take no stock into it," said Skeeter.

Clotilde laughed outright. She took off her big hat, stuck her two turquoise-set hatpins straight up in the crown like artificial flowers, and smoothed her heavy dark hair back from her temples, still chuckling. A middle-aged lady artist, passing along the road from luncheon in the log cabin of a hermit, M. A. of Harvard twenty

years ago and now an unsuccessful symbolist painter, on her way to tea at the country mansion of a retired real estate operator and millionaire, glanced up, saw them, and envied them; but they neither saw nor envied her.

Clotilde explained: "First, we must recognize the truth about things; then, if we're natural, we'll want to do the right, true thing." The somewhat trite formulas gained freshness from the freshness of the person to whom they were introduced. "If we really understand a thing, we'll want to do what is right."

"That ain't so bad." Skeeter mulled it over, and improved on her statement: "Of course a feller'd still want to do things he hadn't ought, but he'd want to *not* do 'em more, seein' what might happen if he did. Yes, the way you explain it, I guess I believe into it. But sometimes—" There was all the sudden melancholy of youth, of star-hungry, stone-fed youth, in his face and voice; he looked at her with half-vacant, half-yearning eyes, forgetting himself in the look of her. "But just sometimes he'd have a hard time decidin'—if he was let do just what he *wanted*."

His look lodged somewhere near her heart, and she turned away, troubled, perplexed; it had come to her before, that yearning hopelessness in a boy's eyes, that yearning for something beyond price that she might have given if she would, but it had never come quite so hopelessly, so devotionally. She asked herself an ancient and familiar question, ancient and familiar, at least, to women both thoughtful and beautiful: who was she to hold in her two white hands such gifts of pain and happiness for the least of human creatures—why was the choice nearly always determined for her in advance that she should

hold out the pain in her left hand, withholding the jeweled happiness in her right, guarding it instinctively, perhaps without rhyme or reason, as a miserable miser guards the gold he could make of use to himself and others only by spending?

She must withhold the happiness, said one authority, to protect herself: children! But Modernity had rearranged that. She must withhold because of morality, precedent, religion, said others: but these were even staler formulas than the new ones that Modernity was helping to make stale as fast as it could. She fell back on a formula that had served her as it had served many another Modern Damsel: the inevitable demand was not there. She could not yield her greatest gift, according to this school, until the inevitable, necessary occasion when, by the harmonizing of her will with the will of the man craving her gift of love, happiness might come at its purest and highest, its topmost toss of perfection, both for them and for the race.

Back of all the formulas, back of the urgent will toward withholding, she wondered, was there not some wellspring of simple human dignity, some necessity for her own spirit to choose its moment, in that as in other things, unforced, unhampered, free?

Mating, with her, would never be the result of forcing, either with the weapons of pleading or of forthright assault of the Carey Beemis variety. The days of carrying the hearts of women of her type by siege and conquest had passed—if they ever really existed: or if, through a succession of assaults, her defenses were leveled, she was led forth captive in the good old way, not only herself, but her conqueror, and society, would

rue the day! Co-operation would take the place of brute force in making the supreme decision of her life, if she had anything to say about it. She would go to meet her lover, conduct him proudly and freely within her gates; she would not receive him cowering and fearful behind her leveled walls. Let but the right man show and identify himself, and he would have a right royal welcome.

Therefore she was quite certain of herself, as any less Modern girl of her station would have been, in the matter of her youthful cavalier's devotion; and her acquaintance with a few basic facts of the situation gave her a background and a surety that a less Modern miss might have lacked. She was not endangered by ignorance, at least, by girlish ignorance that permitted the tantalization of every youth in sight, and resulted in her own tantalization most of all. She despised those kittenish feminine invitations to break a lance on the shield of a titillated heart, invitations sent broadcast, and with no lack of resultant excitement, by all the arts of prim little minxes of bygone generations. Of course the minxes would linger, along with other devoluting types, to the end of a civilization always enriched, when not clogged, by remnants; but, at least, at the moment, minxes were not *au fait*.

Clotilde faced a choice of evils in dealing with the common problem raised by Skeeter. She might keep the conversation on cooler topics, she might send him about his business, or she might take up the subject near and dear to his heart, and explain just why he shouldn't want her. She knew enough of boys sent off to dissipation by girls who played with their callow emotions; the good old threat and practice of drowning one's love-

sorrows in drink had been expanded, and made more specific, by the franker spirit of the times. Clotilde felt a certain responsibility for Skeeter, in spite of the part that pure accident, including a blackberry sucker that ought to have been trimmed in August, had played in their relations.

During some minutes of serious thought, she came to the conclusion that she ought to talk frankly to Skeeter. At the end of that time, she was a serious and sober young lady. She looked back, with a kind of horror, on her tendency to rally Skeeter, to lead him on, using him to tickle her own vanity and far from dormant amatory instincts. So her mother might have felt and done, in days long past, and perhaps less fortunate in the transpiring than in one, at least, of the results.

She looked up at him, clear-eyed, thoughtful, considerate. He was dumbly adoring her over his arm-clasped knees. He had been doing that, and nothing else, for the past five minutes.

"James," she said, "I want to talk seriously, frankly with you—may I?" She reminded herself that she had prefaced some remarks to Henry Hooghtyling with almost the same words; she had been a little too frank, open, and flat with Henry, she suspected, now, and was ready to temper pure truth for Skeeter's benefit.

Skeeter seemed to be somewhat lethargic, perhaps with misery. "Thought we'd been talkin' pretty serious?" he suggested; and added: "Never knew any girl to talk serious—except you."

"But I'm not a girl, James," she took him up, granted an excellent opening; "I'm a grown woman—nearly

twenty-five years old—more than six years older than you are. So I want to talk to you like an older person—”

“Ev'ybody says I'm beyont my years,” he interrupted.

“Well, so am I!” she countered. “I'm enough older than my years to make—”

“You don't look more'n sixteen, or seventeen,” said Skeeter.

“No, and I suppose I don't *act* any older, much of the time; but now I want to act as if I'd reached years of discretion, at least; and I want to say that I'm afraid, without meaning to, I've—got you a little bit stirred up—isn't that true?” She smiled at him with easy friendliness.

“Stirred up?” he repeated, abruptly on his guard.

“Oh, you know how a girl—how pure accidents will sometimes stir a fellow up. It happened that I rode with you as far as the barn, and talked with you—and you noticed me. Then Mr. Hooghtyling happened to send you up to see me—and there was that accident on the road—You see, it was a series of accidents—my being here alone with you on this hillside is another accident.” If Skeeter recognized that as a clever piece of design, he said nothing. “And, as a result of all these accidents, I'm afraid I've stirred you up quite some. You see, I know a good deal about boys—perhaps more than you'd think!”

Skeeter admitted: “Yes—you did—stir me up—a little.” He looked foolish as he said it, and on his guard, as if he expected a typical riposte of feminine raillery.

“Thank you for being frank with me,” said Clotilde;

she felt a renewed and pleasant faith in rural human nature. "As I was just saying to you, if people only understand the truth, and frankly admit it, both to themselves and others, they'll do the right thing. So I thought that, if we'd both just admit that a series of accidents had made you sort of—well, take a *shine* to me—we'd get on much better."

She didn't know where she'd got "*shine*"; it had come out of some rag-bag of her memory. It seemed to fit Skeeter's mood. "Yes, I did sort of take a *shine* to you!" he said, smiling, turned candid as the early autumn day.

"I think it's better just to admit such things—"

"So do I!" agreed Skeeter; he beamed at her, all necessity for secrecy having been removed, fairly intoxicated with the frankness that she had introduced and recommended. "I've got a *shine* on you that's a *wonder!*!" It seemed to do him a world of good to say it.

"Well," resumed Clotilde, slightly dashed; "then I think we will both agree—" Drawing the necessary and obvious conclusions seemed harder. "We will both agree—" She stuck again, and then plunged somewhat awkwardly ahead: "That neither of us is going to make the other miserable by—by considering that *shine* more than it is—but by just forgetting it, and being good friends. Don't you agree with me?"

After a moment's absorption of this anti-climax, Skeeter said, "Oh, sure," and glanced at her; sodden pain had flooded up into his eyes. With a scowl for his own misery and weakness, he turned away. He was no ascetic: renunciation was not sweet.

"I'm *awfully* sorry, James," she said, genuinely moved.

"Sure—it can't be helped—I had no business to go raisin' my eyes to you," he growled, all the light gone out of his face and voice.

"But I'm so much *older* than you are, James!"

"Don't I know, 'tain't *that*?"

Should she end it, send him away? But she didn't want him to go away in the almost reckless despondency that had settled upon him. Better she had never spoken than that. She could fancy him getting drunk, sneaking into infinitely worse and more dangerous dissipations. If he did, she would have had a hand in sullying all love for him, in making a bawdy, bedraggled, dirty thing of the pure emotion his love for her had been—and was. He was a Celt, in spite of his disowned Irish race; he would love with the romantic fervor of a Celt and degrade his love with Celtic thoroughness if it met no response. "The trouble with the Irish," Clotilde groaned inwardly, "is that they can't stand a little healthy adversity." But the fact that he was Irish, she knew, merely intensified his tendency to react as she suspected he would. She had known boys much like him; she had seen them sitting before her in much Skeeter's state, with much his excuse.

After all, what right had they to bring their undesired love to her, to grow despondent, even if they didn't sneer at her and curse her, when she admitted she had no use for their present? Sudden exasperation filled her. "I hoped, James, that you'd take it in a more manly way," she said, trying to conceal her exasperation, and succeeding in surprising herself by her tone of moralistic cheapness.

"Sure—I know I'd ought to." He rose, outwardly calm, but his inward state of active disdain for the moralizer stuck out on him like a sore thumb. He looked at his watch, ostentatiously preparing to take his departure. Another youth, a gilded one of New York and Westchester, had showered her with curses and vile names under almost identical circumstances. Skeeter's acceptance of his turn-down showed up well by comparison with that affair, at least. Nevertheless, she had a shuddery feeling that he was thinking something of what the franker youth had put into words.

"Sit down again, please, James," she said; "I don't want you to go away feeling as you do. Let's talk a little more."

Skeeter sat down, far from hopefully.

"Let's look at the truth about all this—at its possible consequences for both of us," said Clotilde, pulling her skirts as far down over her ankles as they would go; she had put her pumps on some time before, and was prepared to be false to nature, her own and girl-nature in general, to the extent of appearing quite a prude.

"You want to make love to me, don't you? Well, let's suppose you did?"

The supposition took Skeeter's breath; he became quite gawky and pale. "Well—s'pose?" he repeated, struggling for frank self-possession to match her own.

"You'd begin by holding my hand—then you'd want to put your arm around my waist—soon you'd want to kiss me." Clotilde proceeded with the inevitable truth, judiciously, calmly, with a strain of contempt that

reduced, if it did not remove, the headiness of her narrative. "Soon kissing, even, wouldn't satisfy you. Remember, we're facing the whole truth, James! Soon you'd want more, much more, than kissing—"

"No—no!" choked Skeeter, appalled by her hint of "ruining a pure girl," a custom held in high disrepute among Woodbridgians, in spite of its occasional practice. Skeeter was quite panicky.

Clotilde was glad of the effect produced by pure truth. "Oh, yes, you would!" she declared inexorably, "and you know it!" She struggled with a mighty temptation to call a spade a spade and jab him with it. A good jab with a good, solid, truthful spade might do him no end of good. "Please—no—you got me all wrong!" pleaded Skeeter, recognizing his danger, horrified as if he faced a firing squad.

Skeeter showed the blank dismay of a man whom star-gazing has recently deposited at the bottom of a pit. "I never thought of it—like that," he admitted, without daring to look at her. "I didn't mean nothing like that!"

"No—that's just the trouble—the world is carefully arranged to keep that sort of truth from those who need it most!" She was victorious. "We need only to know the truth about these things, to really understand them—and we'll do the right thing! It isn't a lot of old-fashioned moral maxims we need—it's just plain modern truth! Now—isn't everything settled? I hope you'll agree with me that it is!"

For the space of ten seconds it seemed to be settled. At the end of that time, Skeeter ventured: "But you got me all wrong—like I said back there. Of course

there couldn't be anything into it. But, seein's we're bein' so frank, and all that, I was just thinking—” He paused, his face a strange mixture of dull hopelessness and struggling hope.

“ Yes—what were you thinking? ” she encouraged him gently.

“ Well, of course they couldn't be nothing into it.” He affected an unconcern that did away both with the hopelessness and the hope. “ But I was just thinkin', I mean—you didn't git me right. O' course, I mean, you didn't mention I might—might sorta—ask you to marry me. Of course they couldn't be nothin' into it: but I was just thinkin'.”

The appearance of this small, neglected truth exasperated Clotilde; things had been going so swimmingly!

“ But, my dear boy, I'm six or seven years older than you are! ”

“ Well, that ain't the real reason—if we're just talkin' 'bout things as they really are. Look at Hype Vreeden-dorf and his wife—and Ethel Hooghtyling's seven years older'n Henry. Now, o' course, I know it can't happen; but I guess we got to admit it ain't the ages keeps it from happenin'.”

There was sufficient truth in this to drive Clotilde to other grounds.

“ But—” regretfully. “ James, I don't love you—and you don't really love me. You've only got a little ‘shine' on me, you know.”

He disregarded the dimension of the “shine” he had on her. “ Sure you don't,” he admitted. “ I ain't worth it. I ain't nothin' much. But s'pose—just s'pose to be

s'posin'—I got an education—and went into the army—and got famous—”

She interrupted, both exasperated and distressed: “Oh, James—it's *impossible!*”

“Sure—that's what I said—but we was just tryin' to git down to the bed-rock of the old road, wasn't we? I knew they couldn't be nawthin' into it.”

He was rather harder, glummer, more desperate-looking than he had been when they arrived at their previous impasses—all of which were distinguished by the inescapable fact that he couldn't have her. That was the bedrock of truth to which his own and Clotilde's exposition of truth led them—he couldn't have her. Also, to him, there was no inevitable demand that he relinquish her. Inevitable demand played a part in his scheme of things, as well as in hers.

Clotilde searched, in some distress of mind, for further truths, for the truth that would make him want to do the right thing according to her interpretation of right, that would send him from her gladdened, ennobled, with unsullied ideals of love and womanhood, not despondent to the verge of suicide, or other excesses. No further truths appeared; she seemed to have covered the case.

She was more than sorry; verily, her belief in the panaceatic effect of pure, unadulterated truth was shaken. Moved by the disastrous messes she had made of suppressing several boyish crushes in earlier years, she had thought the problem out, as befitted a modern damsel. It had been her solid conclusion that a complete and truthful presentation of the case to any thoughtful, clean-minded, really manly boy would send him on his way

rejoicing. Skeeter answered the description of thoughtful, clean-minded, manly, she had mixed the truthful ingredients according to formula, and yet the result was not as anticipated.

"*Damn it all!*" she muttered under her breath. Was he going from her as glum, disheartened, hardened, desperate as if she had dismissed him in the old-fashioned, flippant, untruthful way? Was there no way of making a boy, a worth-while, honest, manly boy, get over an attack of calf-love without endangering the fabric of Modern idealism, without making him more or less of a menace to himself and society at large?

There seemed not to be.

Or, yes, there might be—one way.

She remembered a post-prandial argument at the table of the Heterodoxy, a Modernistic woman's club to which she gave spasmodic allegiance. A treatment for calf-love had been recommended by a flirtatious, un-Modern miss. "When things have gone too far, I tell them I'm engaged—it usually works beautifully—when they believe it," said this exponent of archaic feminine wiles.

Well—Skeeter would undoubtedly believe it.

But—should she descend to a lie, a thrice damned and un-Modern lie, she, Modern Truth's devoted disciple?

At least Truth might be served by putting the matter to test. She was very Modern. Truth, she ruminated, in its larger aspects, might be served even by a damned lie.

"James," she said, compressing her lips after the word: "James, I've told you the whole truth, and you've understood—but you seem to need more."

She was ironically pleased with her introduction.

"No—I guess I don't need no more—I guess—" he began recklessly.

She interrupted: "So I shall have to tell you that I'm engaged—engaged to be married. Perhaps I should have told you that before—but I thought, if I showed you the plain truth about your feeling for me, that would be enough."

The effect on Skeeter was immediate, electric. "Oh-oh-oh!" The interjection was a long-drawn gasp of surprise and relief, distinctly of relief. "Well—now—o' course—" Apologetic regret entered the *mélange* of his emotions, rapidly became the dominant motive. "I didn't know that, or I wouldn't—I—Say, I hope you'll not think—" He was broken up with apologetic contrition. Engagements still had something of the sanctity of marriages in old-fashioned Woodbridge. If she had abruptly confessed pregnancy to a modern metropolitan youth she could not have produced a more shattering effect. Skeeter got up, hat in hand, glanced around wildly, prepared to fly her presence.

"I tried to be frank with you, James," she said, rising also, amazed by the effect of a simple little lie where so much pure truth had been worse than wasted.

"Sure—my mistake!" He chuckled foolishly, blushed foolishly, foolishly pulled at his forelock; there was something at once important and very, very foolish about an engagement. However, he forgot the foolishness, rose to sudden frankness and respect, as he looked at her serious face.

"You been fine—yes, you been frank—I've learned a lot from what you've told me!" Clotilde's respect for the truth returned a little; perhaps the truth hadn't been

altogether wasted after all. "I'm glad if anything I've said—" she began.

"I guess it *has*! A fellow never thinks about some things without somebody tells him! Believe *me*, I'm grateful to you!" He wagged his head sidewise with intense conviction. "Say, you'll just forget how I—not knowin'—took on?" He sagged with self-depreciation.

"I certainly will—I don't blame you one bit, James." She held out her hand; he accepted it devotionally, and released it quickly, remembering that it was another man's property. The Biblical virtues were strong in him: he could not have coveted another man's wife, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor his fiancée, even if the more terrible prohibition against adultery had not played a part in the tangle of his thoughts and emotions. "If you'd only told me *before!*" he apologized.

"No, you didn't have no *call* to tell me before," he hurried on, answering for her. "Besides, then, you wouldn't have told me—some things—you did. I—I feel better for knowin' you—for talkin'—" He was trying to express the rise in his idealism that Clotilde had hoped her truth would bring him. "I'll think of you when I'm in the army—when I git in a tight hole!" he told her abruptly, putting his feeling for her into concrete and forceful illustration.

She gasped: the nobility, the idealism, demanded both by her Modernism and her woman's instincts, had flowered into fighting proclivities! He paused in the act of turning away, gaping at the look of near-horror that overspread her face. "Oh—but I don't believe in war—you won't enlist, James—if you really want to please me!"

she stammered, and grew more resolute: "If I have any influence with you, let me urge you, as a last request, not to enlist: at least to wait another six months! Will you?"

His acceptance of that was downright insulting: it amused him, he tittered, a somewhat condescending, highly superior masculine titter, and rallied her: "Oh, that's the way all you women talk—you ain't used to fightin'—but I guess if I do anything to get a medal—you won't be so sorry!" He got out his watch again, still tittering, but turning his mind to more important matters than feminine timidity and whims. "I got to hit the road, now—but, say, Mr. Hooghtyling—I'll just run up the road a little, and see if I can spy him, and tell him you're here! Well—" He waved an affable hand at her, beginning to back, still with condescending amusement for her war-feelings, down the hill. "I'll send you a post-card from France! So long!"

She was too much affronted to call a good-by after him; and he, it appeared, was too much amused by her ordinary feminine foolishness concerning man's business, war, to notice that she didn't. "Poor, ignorant boy—typical cannon fodder!" she consoled herself, watching him stride off, with a new dignity because of the indignity that he suspected in her, down the hill. She couldn't really be exasperated with him long: his fighting quirk, his quirk to the effect that her opposition to war was mere woman's timidity, she classified with his other native, boyish, on the whole rather likable, quirks. Indeed, she both pitied and warmed to him for his juvenile rashness, and missed him when he had gone.

She hadn't been the least bit in love with him, of

course, and yet he had freshened her, freshened and exhilarated all her senses by his fresh, devotional boy's appeal to her pity, and to her sex. She needed that gentle freshening, as the petals and stamens of a full-blown rose need the dew. Of course it was infinitely better that Skeeter had gone—gone for good—and yet—

She sighed a little as she picked her way carefully, because of her very feminine footgear, a little further down the hill, and she sighed again as she sat down in full view of the road to wait for Henry Hooghtyling. She felt rather older than usual, a little wilted, drooping, faintly touched with the despondency and denial that might have been Skeeter's intolerable burden but for that damned lie. The trouble with her, she decided, searching through her somewhat shop-worn stock of plain and fancy truths for a true explanation, was that she hadn't had any lunch, and the day's events had been rather wearing. She felt an inexplicable sudden little thrill of resentment against the callow Celtic Wood-bridgian called Skeeter—a resentment that had nothing to do with his attitude toward her war-opinions.

The sun was lower, the wind was cool, carrying a hint of the season's first frost to the rose petals of her face, a wind that seemed unseasonably cold and dry. Clotilde shivered.

"A modern girl never could do it—she knows too much—and the knowledge would dry up the inevitability, the spontaneity, that would be its chief excuse," she told herself. "Such things could only happen beautifully—when ignorance was bliss!"

That thought would go well in the letter to her mother

that she intended to finish that evening, after supper. She liked the bitterish flavor of that thought.

It was growing colder, and the foolish, feminine fripperies that she wore, even though frankly admitting that one chief purpose of them was to add to her feminine allurements, were disgustingly inadequate, both against the growing chill in the air, and the corresponding chill in her feelings.

She wished that Henry would hurry; they might walk up and down the road as they talked, relieving her chilliness. His presence, too, would help to relieve a petulant little feeling of loneliness, of depression. Something had gone out of the day, gone with that callow fighting character called Skeeter, and something else, not so sweet, had come into it.

“I’m *missing* that boy!” she told herself sharply, and felt a little better for forcing herself to face that small, simple truth.

## CHAPTER VIII

A POOR INVALID, LURED ONCE MORE FROM HER CLOSED CARRIAGE, IS CRUSHED TO EARTH, BUNDLED IN AGAIN, AND SENT PACKING BY ETHEL

'A LITTLE further up the hill, Henry Hooghtyling had spent a restful afternoon of pipe smoking and philosophical meditation, fancy free.

A mile beyond and above Henry, Ethel, his dutiful wife, had begun to worry about him. After all, he had gone on a perilous quest, and his heart wasn't strong, and his physique had been weakened by a recent shock. Uncle Aleck, after the removal of a few remnants of molars, had testified that a man needed to be purty peart to stand the gaff—it was no entertainment for ladies and children, by Jeremiah's off ox, it was *not!* Blood-lettin', cuttin', pryin', jabbin', pullin', till a man's neck was out o' joint—Oh, boy! and yes, yes!

Ethel thought of Henry's neck, not much larger than a sapling inside its sagging and loosened sheath of wrinkled skin. Could Henry's neck stand the strain? The idea of such a neck subjected to much pulling would have caused flutterings in a harder and less intimately concerned heart than she carried in her buxom bosom. Probably Infinite Wisdom had constructed few softer, larger, more gentle, and more easily affected hearts than hers. When pain or danger hovered over any member of her matriarchate, her heart fairly threatened to leap out of the ample bounds provided for it.

While she had been busy, magnificently, athletically busy, with doing her two washings and a half—counting her own weekly addition to the tub as at least half a washing—she had not had time to worry much. But the washing was all out on the line by three o'clock; the housework was all done, too. Ordinarily, she would have gone down to lend a helping hand to her daughter-in-law, but, Henry being on her mind, she sat down and worried about him for a complete half-hour.

"Hen has got so awful much *spunk*—he's so like to take even serious trouble without any fuss and feathers," she told herself, among other things, "that a body forgets he ain't really what you'd call strong."

She also reminded herself that "he didn't rest well last night, neither." And that "maybe my badgerin' him about his stummick sent him off down there when he wasn't feelin' up to it, no way." And also, returning to her first theme: "He's *nervy*, Hen is; he don't rightly know the meanin' of *fear*. He'd go and do a thing, though he knew it might lay him clean out—

"Settin' down into that chair, that looks for all the world like the chair they use to 'lectrocute criminals, up to Sing Sing," complained Ethel, with tears in her voice; "all bleedin'—him that ain't got no more blood than a good-sized turnip—gettin' his neck pulled all around crooked—Hen's neck!"

She cleared her throat, calmed the palpitations of her heart, compressed her large competent mouth. "There, I just ain't going to worry about it any more!" This decision, forced by the memory of Hen's own attitude toward sentiment, was arrived at near the end of the half-hour devoted to nothing else. "Worryin' and

whinin' never yet lifted a mortgage," she told herself, quoting her idiomatic spouse, subservient even to his memory.

She tried to read some more of the adventures of the gentleman who loved and conquered in the red-backed book, but her eyes looked through the pages.

"I'll bet he wanted me to go with him!" she told herself, giving up all pretense of bookishness. "When he stopped and asked if they was anything he could get me down to Kingston, he was just waitin' for me to ask to go with him, too look a'ter him in his time of trial. That's his way—never forcin' a body, always givin' a woman a chance to speak up for hersel-l-l-f!" She was near tears again. "And I didn't say nothin'—and he wouldn't say nothin', o' course, that bein' his way—and he went away disappointed—Lor' blast me for a ninny for not knowin' what he was up to—for not goin' with him!"

She arose and slapped the book down on a corner of the white oilcloth-covered kitchen table, already set for supper,—slapped it down with a vigor that sent a few grains of sugar rolling out of the brimmed glass sugar bowl. All of her motions, especially when her emotions were stirred, bespoke astonishing muscle, vigor, vimful determination. "Bu-uh-uh!" she snorted, shaking her head like a horse finding feathers in its hay. "I can't be settin' here when he may a-fainted—be laid out somewhere with a shawl over him and a saw-bones feelin' his pulse! Leastwise, he'll never be able to walk up from the village—if he ever gets that fur!"

She strode into the connubial cubby-hole of a bedroom, donned green bonnet and long, heavy, fuzzy black coat,

took her yellow kid gloves in her hand, and set forth to rescue and to save. Now that her doings once more deserved the name of action, her sentiments were well in control. Out along the bluestone flagging to the gate she stromped, erect, head back and up, chest forward, stomach in, legs moving with military precision, two hundred and fifty pounds of excellently muscled health, heft, and determination. The woman commander of Russia's Battalion of Death might have envied her.

Yes, Hen had had a shock, a considerable shock, only the previous afternoon, she reflected, and her spine stiffened for the reflection. That mysterious woman, that female of villainous smoothness, spruceness, good-looks, all the earmarks of a proper fictional adventuress, was somehow mixed up with her Henry, with Ethel Hooghty-ling's Hen. As bound to do by her marriage vows and all her inclinations as well, she had obeyed Henry's orders not to meddle in this matter, not even to think of it, to the extent of her well-regulated ability. Her self-control had been marvelous; and yet, somewhere in the back of her head was a lingering memory of that woman, a few lingering suspicions as to what that woman had been trying to do to Hen. That memory made her additionally glad that she was hastening to Henry's side, that she was a fine figure of a woman in her new bonnet and cloak, carrying her new yellow gloves fashionable in her left hand, that she felt abundant power of mind and arm to deal with any emergency. She was as completely, overpoweringly motivated as an Ibsen drama.

A pleasant stimulation, both of fresh September air and sun, and of impending mysteries, dangers, pitfalls

related both to teeth and suave adventuresses, filled her veins. The whole world was mysterious, dangerous, a thing that would bear watching, such watching as she was competent to supply, at least in one considerable corner. No proper paper-back, or cloth-back, either, but revealed the multitudinous dangers and mysteries lurking on every hand. She felt like a noble duchess of romance, going forth to face trouble, to face it like a heroine and vindicate a happy ending. Of course little Woodbridge was no such castled and darkly mysterious place as was granted to more favored duchesses overseas, and yet even little Woodbridge—

"And yet they's a good deal nobody knows nawthin' much about goes on, even in little old Woodbridge—especially since the artusses came in," surmised Ethel, glancing down and out at the sleepy valley community as revealed from the bend in the downward road, near a corner of the Hooghtyling orchard. "If a body had an eye like God's, and could see down through the roofs of all them houses and stoddums—" She shook her head, darkly pondering the secrets of Woodbridge.

As a matter of fact, there were several things that nobody knew nothing much about going on in Woodbridge at that particular instant of time; it needed no superhuman vision to prove it. Edna Kling knew of some of the matters, Cy Wetmore, Alfred Brown, the hermit symbolist, and Major Parkinson knew of others. By taking a consensus of their very human knowledge and visions, eschewing the discredited supernatural as unmodern, the following were a few of the more or less piquant happenings taking place in Woodbridge at that moment:

Beginning near at hand, in the bungalow of Professor and Mrs. Benson Hodges, half a mile from the Brooks' boarding house, a young instructor of Italian in Columbia, having secured the keys from Professor Hodges under false pretenses, was enjoying, in the company of a girl Ph.D. from Barnard, as hectic a culmination of a three-weeks' romance as ever got into fiction. Professor Hodges, having moved down to New York for the winter, would be certain to find this out from the Brooks, in due time, and speak harshly to the young instructor of Italian.

Further down, in the Klings' bungalow, Edna was saying to the blinking Arthur: "I'll bet she's out with Carey Beemis—and I'll have Helen Hope on my hands this whole blessed night—*Da-a-amn it!*"

Still further down, before the flag-pole near the entrance to his white little cottage, the Major was expressing his acceptance of an invitation to attend Cy Wetmore's stag, that evening.

"Glad you can come—we want to make it the best of the season, since it's to be the last—we are going to make a bonfire out of the front porch, among other attractions—and there'll be a real punch, Major, a *real* one!" said Cy; he was in a hired automobile, a great hurry, and a fine state of expectation.

Diagonally across the road, Miss Grace Carton, the miniaturist, was weeping over her Persian pussy, "Smoke," because he *would* eat out of garbage pails, and get the gripes. Half a mile away, in "Green Gables," the mistress of the mansion, a disappointed and reckless beauty because, in spite of her great catch, London and New York society hadn't been able to forget her chorus-

girl precedents, was locked in her room, delicately sniffing cocaine. Her husband, older than Henry Hooghty-ling, but still affectionate, was having tea on the other side of the valley, in the bungalow of a spinster portrait painter; all three of them anticipated a lively time before the night was out. In her studio, a few hundred yards nearer the village, Mrs. Ladson, grass widow and tapestry designer, had removed her cigarette to say to Charley James Bright: "My husband is straight-laced; he'd never agree to a divorce; and I don't know that I want one, anyway."

Skipping a dozen village houses and bungalows in which Woodbridgians, both immigrant and autochthonous, were doing perfectly proper and conventional, and therefore uninteresting, things, the living-room of Helen Hope's little studio-bungalow, near the banks of the Skuyterkill, was torn up as if a recent cyclone had passed that way. Helen was standing bolt upright, short hair disheveled, hands still clenched, lips purple and bitten, glaring at the results of her recent lonely fury, repeating to herself: "A woman scorned!" and thinking of bread-knives, revolvers, prussic acid, cyanide of potassium, knotted sheets, all the conventional means of murder, or suicide, or both.

In the Tannery Brook boarding house, alone in the room where he at least had made a pretense of living, Carey Beemis was packing his suitcase. "Told her nothing but the truth—it had to come—we agreed to tell each other the plain truth, if it had to come," he reassured himself miserably, for the hundredth time: adding, at least for the fiftieth time: "*Damn the women!*" and feeling particularly vicious when he thought of Clotilde as,

all things considered, the one woman whose damning would be most agreeable to him.

Several doors down the street, in their two front rooms in the old Potter house, Angus Andrew MacDonald was convincing his wife that it would be necessary for him to appear at Cy Wetmore's party: "But, dear, everybody will be there—and it's the last stag of the season—they'll say I'm henpecked if I don't show up. Why, even Arthur Kling's going!"

"Yes—and you'll all get howling drunk—probably burn the house down—and you know, Angie, we simply can't afford another such contribution for damages as was necessary after Allan Brooke's party!"

"Aw, forgit it! It's going to be a quiet little party, I tell you—I doubt whether there'll be anything stronger than beer to drink—you know how hard up Cy Wetmore is," her husband urged. "And all real booze at war prices!"

If this seems anti-climactic, let us return toward Ethel, in fact within fifteen minutes of Ethel's vigorous approach, to where a matter that nobody knew nawthin' much about was being aired by Henry Hooghtyling and Clotilde. They were sitting on the remains of the old stone wall, near the deserted road, and their conversation, even if it was a little guarded, was everything in quietness and friendliness that Clotilde had hoped for.

They had passed through generalities, through the presentation of the tan jabot, which dangled incongruously at the throat of Clotilde's white silk shirtwaist, and had entered upon a point specifically at issue.

"Why, yes, sure—I suppose they's lots of things we

could each tell the other," Henry had just admitted, in response to Clotilde's question.

She continued: "Yes. You see, the world is changing so fast nowadays, a girl often needs the help of plain common sense, of good conservative wisdom founded on experience. There are so many—so *very* many—things I'd like to talk over with you!"

Henry was receptive: "Well—go ahead! They's nawthin' to prevent."

"Oh, lots of things—especially about the changes that have come into the lives of women." Clotilde was vague and general; she moved, with care in handling the plain truth that would have done credit to Henry himself, in the direction of a plea for their great intimacy: "Now, if I could only—"

"Well, what changes, uh?" demanded Henry, devoted to the specific instance as always, enjoying a chance for intellectual conversation.

"Oh, in economics—the right of a woman to be economically independent." She was prepared to pass lightly over specific instances. "Yes, that might be some change," admitted Henry doubtfully, not recognizing under the high-sounding nomenclature the arrangement which he and Ethel had worked out and greatly enjoyed. "The right of women to be separate entities, separate individuals," Clotilde flitted on. "To have their own occupations—yes, and to have children, without being married, if they want to. You see, there are many questions coming up for settlement in the big cities—"

"Minds me of Ella Collins," put in Henry. "There was a queer case. Had three children, never got married —when she wanted to get married people said it just

didn't seem right to have Ella married; and besides, ev'ybody said, who'd do the spring paperin' round here, if she got married and went away. She was a good woman. Even the Dominie, at her funeral, said he didn't think the Lord would hold it against her, for all she never got married."

"Oh—she—you mean to say, she wasn't *ostracized*?" asked Clotilde.

"Not that I ever heard of—leastways, she kep' right on havin' children," said Hen, arriving at a snap judgment of "ostracized" that did him some credit. "We never did take much stock in some of the fancy new ways for reformin' the criminal classes round here. I was talkin' to Doctor MacFee about it, and he said he didn't believe into it, neither."

"But—you said Ella Collins was a good woman—she didn't belong to the criminal classes?" suggested Clotilde, quite at sea as to Henry's flirting with the ultra-modern idea of sterilization.

"Sure not—I was just thinkin' of what you said. Ella, she was all right. She was a paperhanger by trade, and she was a good one—and half agin as cheap as most. Used to sing in the Baptist choir, over at Montoma—righteous good soprano, she was, too."

"And she supported herself—and the children?" Clotilde had stumbled upon a modern instance, and been side-tracked by it; she imagined herself revealing it, in its primitive glory, at a meeting of the Heterodoxy.

"Sure, she did. Brought up her children right, too. One of 'em in California, now, and one of 'em, the girl, married a elevated railroad conductor, down to Brooklyn; the other boy, he never did amount to much; he lives

up Onteora way, now. She took good care on 'em, and she made money.

"But she never done much better," said Henry, "by herself and her children than Pearlie Wilson, lives down to Woodbridge Village, did. Pearlie, she kinda got mixed up with a married man, carpenter by trade, and said she had a right to have him, even if he was married, seein' as he loved her more'n he did his wife. They set up housekeepin' in the village, but it got so folks wouldn't hire the man to do work for 'em—they said he hadn't done right, desertin' his wife and livin' with another woman right under her nose, so to speak. So Pearlie and her man, they moved over to Big Indian. Then the man got lonesome and wanted to come back to Woodbridge, where he'd lived all his life, so he came back to his wife, and people hired him again; but Pearlie, she stayed over there till she had her baby. Then she wrote to the man, and told him he'd ought to stand at least half of her lyin'-in expenses, if he thought that was fair, and he said he thought it was fair enough, but he didn't have the money, so Pearlie borryed the money from Doctor MacFee, and came back and worked it out doin' washin's and such. She'd a-had a hard time if her cousin hadn't took her in; he didn't have much money, but his wife was dead, and he give her board for herself and the baby for doin' work around the house. He keeps that tin shop, t'other side the Lutheran Church. By'nby he got older, and Pearlie got to doin' most of the work 'round the shop. I guess she's doin' pretty well now—anyway, she's sent her daughter off to board in Kingston and go to the High School. But she sure had a rough time at first."

"She's living, *now*—in Woodbridge?" asked Clotilde.

"Sure—she's round the tin shop most every day—hires a man to do most of the rough work now she's got on pretty well, and her cousin requirin' good deal 'tention, him havin' got a little foolish, 's old men are like to do. Yes, she's got on pretty well, though not so well as Ella did, having less competition."

Henry lapsed into philosophical meditation. "Yes, they's a lot into not gettin' married, 'specially for a woman," he said. "I dunno but what both Ella and Pearlie done better'n a good many o' the regular married women 'round here, for all they had their troubles at times."

"Well," said Clotilde; "this is all interesting—*very* interesting. It does me good to talk over such problems with you. You see, I *do* want to be good friends with you. Now, how am I going to really be good friends with you when I can't come to see you—and you can't come to see me?"

"I dunno," said Henry cautiously, "but what I might come to see you, ev'y once in so often."

Clotilde objected: "But it would be *underhanded!* I don't like underhanded things—the idea of deceiving people. Suppose it were discovered—as it might be, you know,—that you were coming to see me—and your wife didn't understand why?"

"Oh, I guess I can work that all right." Henry was inclined to airy persiflage. He waved his pipe. "What Ethel don't know won't hurt her none. Not but what I ain't ready to explain to her; but it's got to take time. She's got to be *eddictated* to it. Now I can eddicate her—but it's got to be done—gentle. Slow, you know—

step at a time. She gits all excited when anything hits her sudden-like. And she's got a temper—my eye, the temper that Ethel's got—it's plumb amazin'!"

"I think I've seen some of it," remarked Clotilde dryly. She pitied old Henry; his boasting of his ability to handle his Amazonian wife reminded her of a boy whistling in the dark.

"Oh, Ethel ain't such a bad sort—not such a *tarnation* bad sort," mentioned Henry, replying to the animosity in Clotilde's voice. "O' course she needs a good deal of eddicatin'—and she gets queer ideas from the books she's always a-readin'; but she ain't such an *infernal* bad sort, Ethel ain't."

"Well—that isn't the question—" began Clotilde; of course she admired Henry for standing up for his wife, the more in proportion as that wife undoubtedly needed standing up for.

"In fact, she's fairly decent in some ways," proceeded Henry; as was his way in dealing with any person or thing that possessed his whole soul's admiration, he was proceeding from downright depreciation, through delicate degrees of praise, to the heights of laudation; in this way he attained a climax made greater by contrast. "She's a good worker, honest as daylight, hearty, uncomplainin', don't let nawthin' get her down—why, the times I been plumb ready to give up and say, Bring on the rope, I'm ready to quit—"

"Oh, yes—of course—" interrupted Clotilde.

"And just the look on her face'd put me on my feet again!" declared Henry, inevitably, determinedly, on his way to the heights. "What a woman she's been to me—what she ain't done! Crawlin' round, near dead, with

half a dozen ailiments any one the doctor said was enough to kill her—and it's enough to give a man a feelin' in the goodness of Providence to see the way she's come through it all, too! I reckon they ain't no man in Woodbridge township's got a woman's been to him what Ethel's been to me! When I die, and tough's I am I guess I won't last a great while longer, she'll be s'prized to see what she's got comin' in the way of insurance money! She thinks I got only a measly little thousand dollars—Uh! I'd like to see her face when she sees them two policies I took out since then—Lord, how I had to lie to her to keep her from guessin' where the money was goin'! Say, I'll hate to be dead because I can't see how she'll look! I ain't got no foolish notions I'll be around watchin' her after that—sometimes I'm most *tempted*—” Henry stared grimly into vacancy, full of his edifying problem. “Actually, I’m most tempted to show her them policies, some Chrismus, say, just to see how she’ll take on!”

There was a silence. The sun had gone down, there was frost in the air; Clotilde shivered, in spite of her forgetfulness of the state of the weather, and Henry leisurely knocked out his pipe and got to his feet.

“I got to be climbin’ the ole hill,” he announced, gathering up the paper bag that held his aged green hat. “Chores to do, and Ethel’ll be pretty tired, what with a big washin’.”

Clotilde rose also, crossed her thinly clad arms, and hugged herself with an unconscious little shiver. “I’ll walk a little way up with you,” she volunteered. “We haven’t even arranged when I’m to see you again.”

Henry looked doubtful, suggested doubtfully: “Well,

maybe we just better leave it till I have time to kinda git Ethel started onto the right track. And maybe you better not—maybe you better just run along down—you got quite a ways to go, you know—" He glanced in the direction of home and Ethel. " Nothin' sudden ought to happen—I got things goin' along smooth—steady's the word, slow and steady—'specially that's the word with Ethel. She's a trifle excitable, Ethel is—forgets herself like—"

" Well—will you come down to the Klings' house to-morrow afternoon? " demanded Clotilde, blocking his way.

Henry looked over her shoulder, up the homeward road that vanished around the curve of one of its numerous zigzags, fifty feet away. " Hear anything? " he asked anxiously. " Team must be comin'—seems to me I kinda *feel*—but my ears ain't good."

" It sounds like a team, " admitted Clotilde, turning to stare up the road.

" Good-by! " Henry was already on his way, passing her. " Maybe you can catch a ride—but we oughtn't be seen—"

Ethel came around the turn in the road, striding magnificently downward, sending road-bed dust flying at each earth-shaking stride, saw them, paused, stood motionless, a large, ominous, black-coated effigy of indignant surprise.

Henry stood still; Clotilde glanced from the statuesque Ethel to him. She expected him to quail, perhaps to faint, and she was prepared to defend him, or to support his nerveless limbs to the ground, whichever should prove necessary. Clotilde swelled to the occasion,

drew herself up on her high-heeled pumps until she was taller than Henry, stood so four-square and chesty that her bosom, though not to be compared to the mighty breast-works of Ethel, suggested power and virginal invincibility: Joan of Arc never faced enemy with a face more conscious that Truth stood at her right hand.

But Henry did not quail. To the high and honorable and altogether liberty-or-death expressions on the faces of the two women, he opposed a fussy disgust, a common-sense distrust and dislike of heroics, whether founded on the Pure Truth that armed Clotilde or the Moral Righteousness that made Ethel a tower of strength and determination.

Slowly, ominously, stepping off the intervening length of road with the imperturbability of a proper duchess bearing retribution for the foul wrong, Ethel approached. Her eyes transfixed Clotilde. Clotilde waited for her, quailing no more before her than David quailed before Goliath. It was a situation with three heroes, three champions of three supreme virtues; there needed no deep-dyed villain or villainess to give it weight and significance. With Truth, Morality, and Common Sense met by proxy on the Field of Honor any ordinary human villain, any personage less important than the Devil himself, could not but have obfuscated the issues. Even the Devil might not have added anything important.

Common Sense's champion dealt the first blow, a light, tentative stroke, not intended to do damage so much as to try out Morality's champion's armor: "What's the matter, Ethel? Anything wrong up to the house?"

Morality's champion's armor rang like the hardened steel it was: "There's nothing wrong up to the house,

Hen; but I don't know 'bout some other places!" Morality's champion had a deep, baritone voice, a measured accent; she looked rather at the slim, virginal, white-faced champion of Truth than at disgusted Common Sense as she spoke. Morality, standing decently clothed, buxom and self-confident behind her champion, stared malignantly at the Truth that stood at Clotilde's right hand.

Truth, venturing from the closed carriage in which Clotilde had brought her up to Woodbridge, had taken her courage in her hands; she answered Morality's challenging sneer with a face calm, white as carven marble, with eyes cold and blue as ice. Truth was barefooted in the dust of the road, and her few filmy draperies were no adequate protection; she had thoughtlessly, as usual, left her eider-down comforter and steamer rugs in the carriage down the hill, when she realized that another struggle with Common Sense, and especially with Morality, was imminent; she had a single-track mind.

"You are mistaken, Mrs. Hooghtyling—there is absolutely no wrong here!" declared Truth's champion, in a ringing contralto; "except the wrong you do us by—"

"Oh—isn't there?" rumbled the defender of Morality; whereupon Morality stuck out her tongue at Truth, and Truth averted her sculpturesque face. Their quarrel was an old one, and Morality generally had so much the better of it that Truth, when venturing down from her mountain-tops into the haunts of mortals, usually was reduced to invalidism at once, and remained in a weakened and battered state till she went back to recuperate. One seeing Truth during these visits, catching a glimpse

of her through the windows of her carriage, would never have believed her the same splendid virgin who was accustomed to greet the sunrise, naked, in immortal loveliness, from the icy summits of a heaven-scaling crag. But still, as of old, she harkened to the prayers of her rare devotees, and attempted to reveal herself to mortals. Morality, whose breath was short, whose corsets made her face purple if she walked half-way up one of the low Catskill hills, usually managed to make her visits short and unpleasant. Common Sense, while respecting Truth at the bottom of his hale old heart, recognized that her objection to clothes, especially conventional clothes, made her a menace to imperfect civilizations, and, in general, sided with Morality, even while despising Morality, and dealing her many hard knocks. Common Sense, looking like a heartier, happier, more prosperous brother to Henry Hooghtyling, sat on the nearby stone wall, and chuckled.

"Let's not get excited, now—no use gettin' excited till we find out what we're gettin' excited about," suggested Common Sense's champion, for the benefit of Morality's champion's reddening face and dangerously gleaming eyes.

"No—let's just explain—" began Clotilde, shivering both because of her own scanty coverings, and out of sympathy for the nearly naked Truth at her side.

"I guess it *needs* some explainin'!" boomed Ethel, deepening her baritone to upper bass. Morality leaned forward and whispered in her ear. "First, I find you holdin' my husband in your arms, him havin' fainted—next day I find you loiterin' on the road with him! Yes, I guess it'll *need* some explainin'!"

Truth ventured a tremulous word of advice to Clotilde. "The fact is, Mrs. Hooghtyling, I'm Henry's daughter," explained Clotilde, somewhat weakly; Truth on the instant, obeying her natural impulses almost subconsciously, it seemed, let fall every stitch of drapery she had brought with her from her carriage, and stood revealed, white and wonderful as any poet-sculptor's marble dream of her. Common Sense, forced to admiration but very doubtful of her taste, shook his head and sighed, smiling faintly. Henry imitated him, with a personal modification in favor of a philosophical sniff. As for Morality, she threw up her hands in absolute horror, and averted her blushing face. Morality's champion glared daggers, found no words, for a moment, fit for the shameful situation, turned quite purple with sudden horror. "You—you hussy!" she gasped, searching for her lost voice.

"Soft, now—things is going too fast—and fur!" put in Common Sense's warrior. "Don't forgit yourself, Ethel!" Ethel's lifted forearms and suddenly working fingers suggested an immediate personal attack both upon the shockingly naked Truth and upon the naked Truth's not overclothed spokesman. "Remember, Ethel, you always regret it when you forgit yourself!" Henry warned her, truthfully interpreting the grim enjoyment and uneasiness of Common Sense on the stone wall, a few paces away.

"Yes, Hen." The answer was soft. Morality at once looked around, surprised, shocked, by the change in her champion's voice and air. Vivaciously she argued with Ethel, spitefully she informed her that Henry was equally guilty, that it was Morality against the field. Ethel shook her head. "Well, then, for Conscience's

sake, go after those two shameless, brazen, indecently exposed hussies over there!" urged Morality.

"I've told you the truth, Mrs. Hooghtyling!" insisted Clotilde.

"You—you—and your *Truth!*!" gasped Ethel, glaring at both of them. "Why, you shameless—"

"Now, *Ethel!*"

"Yes, Hen."

Morality bit her lips for exasperation. Her champion was certainly disappointing. Married women often were when their husbands were concerned. "Oh, for a man, a good orthodox minister of the gospel—or a noble, moral-minded spinster!" sighed Morality.

As for Common Sense, with a bit of a chuckle he fished a fat black cigar out of his waistcoat pocket, lit it, and puffed blue wreaths of enjoyment into the evening air. He had become accustomed to bear off the palm quite as often as Morality in these enlivening three-cornered squabbles. There was an ironical touch in this because he didn't care for palms especially—at least not with the fervor characteristic of those female enthusiasts, Truth and Morality. He was quite satisfied with the way things were going. Henry Hooghtyling, his not unworthy representative, got out pipe and tobacco. Henry, also, seemed fairly content with the state of the conflict.

"I just want to say," resumed Ethel, in a voice that caused Morality to hope again, though faintly, "Miss, that if you're expecting to alienate my husband's affections, you'll have to reckon with the law—I guess I know something about the law—and if you think—"

"Oh, *won't* you understand? I've told you the *truth*—I have a *right*—"

"The *truth*? I guess I know how much *truth*!"

"That is your line!" urged and approved Morality, with a regard for the Truth approximating the Devil's for holy water, and with excellent reason, too. Ethel rushed on, seizing the opportunity given by the lighting of Henry's pipe: "I don't want any of your old truth! I want you to leave my *husband alone!* If you *don't*—"

Common Sense had already removed his cigar from his mouth to gape; Henry, after one good whiff, removed his pipe. "Now, everybody just shut up a minute!" commanded Henry.

"But, Hen—" Morality's champion fell back at least two paces. Morality, in complete disgust, turned away and walked up the road a few paces to get her feelings under control.

"I said—everybody shut up!" growled Henry; his prominent blue eyes, enhanced by straggling reddish eyebrows, looked from Truth to Morality, and to their respective champions, with equal disfavor. Common Sense puffed his cigar, removed it as his risibilities became too much for him. "Wow!" he muttered, chuckling so that his mirth made him shake through all his substantial members. "That dried-up old Dutch farmer—who'd a-thought it?"

"Yes, Hen." Morality's champion was temporarily out of the combat. Common Sense turned his attention to the Truth contingent.

Truth herself, uplifted, angry, shaken with flaming indignation by this attempt at suppression, urged Clotilde to speak, to vindicate freedom of speech. "Freedom of speech—speak, speak out the truth!" she commanded; "shall any mere man, or combination of men and cir-

cumstances, suppress freedom of speech, close up the great channel of the Truth? Think of your brothers and sisters, my devotees, undergoing arrest, vilification, now, on the street corners of New York City, for the sake of freedom of speech—the truth as revealed to them—”

“ Hell,” put in Common Sense, less in anger than regret. “ Think of expediency, kid, think of expediency.”

“ Don’t listen to that blasé old hedonist!” cried Truth, her whole body turning rosy with excitement and shame.

“ I think I’d rather wait and hear what Henry has to say for Common Sense,” objected Clotilde, faintly resisting even her adored Truth.

Common Sense went off into a silent, open-mouthed burst of laughter. “ Who says the world don’t move? It’ll be better for you, Truth, in the end, if kiddo there keeps her mouth shut. That old farmer’ll fix things yet,” he remarked.

“ What do I care for better or worse?” wailed Truth. “ Who has a right to count the cost?” But she realized that she had lost at least a part of Clotilde’s devotion. She shuddered, not with the cold which was her native element, but with regret for human frailty. She was weakened, too, by several days among mortals, especially by her Woodbridge experiences, begun under such favorable auspices, in the company of Clotilde.

“ So it goes,” remarked Truth sadly. She found her drapery—it resembled a lace curtain in most particulars—and threw it around her. Even if it did her no greater service, it was a sign of her dejection.

Henry, with the matter pretty much in his hands, puffed his pipe. “ We got to consider facts—and we got to consider how people’ll take ‘em,” he announced.

"Hear, hear!" applauded Common Sense, from the stone wall.

"But the truth is greater than any number of mere facts," Truth mentioned sadly to Clotilde. Morality, returning down the road, snarled gruffly at Ethel: "Tell him morality's deeper than what people will say!" But neither Truth nor Morality had much faith in the outcome. Only Common Sense was jubilant.

"Clotilde here, she's right—she's told the truth—and there's nawthin' like the Truth," Henry proceeded firmly.

"Aw, come off!" muttered Common Sense, slightly shocked.

"The Truth is mighty, and shall prevail." Henry chewed his pipe stem.

"Rotten—wake up—get onto yourself!" growled Common Sense, bouncing up from his comfortable seat, shaking out his trousers with a vicious kick of either foot. Henry took no notice of him whatever; Morality glowered malignantly at him, and Truth favored him with a sad smile. "You old fool!" sputtered Common Sense, coming over to be nearer his wavering disciple.

"Then, too," pursued Henry, "we got to think of what people will say—they's such a thing as other people's feelin's."

"He's lying to you, plain lying!" Morality told her paralyzed, dumbfounded champion. "His daughter—do you think it's possible? Look at her—look at him! Why's she after him? He's lying—just to put you off!" But Ethel indignantly repulsed her: "Hen never lies! 'Tain't in him!" "Oh, you poor weak married women!" sputtered Morality, recognizing the uselessness

of one of her chief weapons, forged and sharpened for her by the Devil himself.

"They's such a thing as morality—when a man's done wrong, he'd ought to stand ready to take the consequences—I ain't thinkin' so much of myself," Henry proceeded. ("Damn the old farmer!" sputtered Common Sense, chewing at his cigar.) "I'm thinkin' more of Ethel, here," said Henry. "She's got something to say about this. So has Clotilde, here."

"Oh, Hen—" choked Ethel, her eyelids beginning to quiver; she walked unsteadily over to his side, put her hand in his arm.

Clotilde stammered faintly: "I didn't mean—of course—I wanted what was best for everybody—"

"I've done wrong—it was a long time ago—I was wild—like all young bucks—not that I'm offerin' excuses—" Henry choked over his confession.

"Aw, *He-ell-l!*!" groaned Common Sense. But he brightened up a bit when he looked at Truth; Truth, pulling her scanty draperies about her, was cowering against Clotilde for protection. "Really, my dear—I don't think—I can stand much more—" she gasped. "I know—I know," whispered Clotilde, comforting both her goddess and herself; "but if it does him good to think of it like that—and if it does Ethel any good—" "Ingrate—false disciple!" cried Truth, aroused, drawing clear of Clotilde's presence. "Bottle o' soothing syrup for the Truth—quick!" ordered Common Sense, quite himself again. "Can't you say one word for me, dear—can't you at least say one word that will cover my shame from that odious brute?" Truth glared like an aroused Diana at Common Sense.

Clotilde, so hectored, began faintly: "Both in fairness to Henry, and to Mrs. Hooghtyling, I think I ought to say that it doesn't seem to me to have been wrong—what happened, so many years ago between my mother and him—not so very wrong at least. Let us look at it fairly, let us try to get at the truth of it. Isn't it nearer the truth that both my mother and Henry—"

"Oh!" burst from Ethel; Morality had just jogged her in the ribs, shouting in her ear: "Merciful Heavens—she's defending it—your husband's error with that abandoned woman! Speak up if you have any regard for morality!"

"The *truth*—you're always talkin' about the *truth*!" gasped Ethel, freeing herself from her husband's arm, glaring through Clotilde at the naked Truth that cowered behind her.

"Now, Ethel!" Henry warned her; but no submissive "Yes, Hen" came back. Ethel was in process of forgetting herself: "How dare you come up here where me and Hen has lived happy these thirty years, more or less, tellin' your immoral—your dirty old secret—sayin' it's the truth, that it wasn't wrong?" The thunder of her voice, the lightning of her eyes, piercing the gathering twilight, piercing even the obstructive barrier of Clotilde, smote the feeble and discouraged Truth full in the forehead. Truth swayed, trembled. "Tellin' me my husband is *that* sort of a man—what do I care whether it's true or not when I can't never sleep again quiet of nights for thinkin'—Oh, God! Oh, God! I wish I'd never heard o' the *Truth*—I wish the *Truth* was in *hell*!" Tears streamed down her face, but they did not soften the steady flow of electricity from her blinking eyes.

Clotilde faced her, overwhelmed, shrinking, utterly amazed. Truth, immediately behind her, sank down crushed, in a dead faint, in the dust of the road.

"Ethel, when you get through forgettin' yourself—" Henry remarked, cool as his maximatic cucumber. "Say, you're not doing so badly," Common Sense informed him; "if only you hadn't lived all your life in the backwoods, there might be some hope for you." Common Sense turned toward Morality. "Let's go down to the Inn, and have some supper," he suggested. "There isn't going to be anything creditable for any of us divinities in the outcome of this row—although Truth will get it in the neck solider than either you or I—as usual."

"Just wait a minute," objected Morality, nodding at Ethel. "I'm not so sure." Morality was looking more hopeful.

"The *truth* is, it's a *disgrace!*!" stormed Ethel. Truth, as usual after a collapse, rose feebly to her feet. Ethel attacked her vigorously: "Get out, you and your Truth—get out—I never want to see either of you again!"

"Are you coming, dear?" asked Truth mournfully, retreating toward the privacy and invalid's wrappings of her closed carriage.

"I am *not!*!" returned Clotilde; to Ethel she announced, sharply: "You are taking just the proper course to make everything hard for all of us—isn't she, Mr. Hooghty-ling?" Henry puffed his pipe.

"Well, why do you come around lettin' out such things?" demanded Ethel; she was by way of getting over forgetting herself, but still ruthless in her pursuit of retreating Truth. "People don't go uncoverin' old

stink-holes less'n they have to, do they?" Truth had reached her carriage door; this blow seemed to lift her bodily, and she disappeared from view. Common Sense and Morality looked at each other and grinned.

"Do you mean to call me a stink-hole—or a product of one?" demanded Clotilde, now that Truth had disappeared, getting down to concrete facts.

"Woof!" said Common Sense, recognizing a new champion. "Hit 'er again!"

"Her illustration is beside the point—completely," objected Morality.

"Well—I—" hesitated Ethel, too much shocked to appreciate the fine retort offered by Morality.

"If you don't like to talk about the Truth," pursued Clotilde evenly, "let's just talk about a few plain facts. Isn't it a fact that I have some claims on my father—on the man who begot me? Didn't he accept any responsibility when he did that? Is it *my* fault that I wasn't born in a proper and moral way?"

"Many a better woman than you, Miss," said Ethel, "has had to bear the sins of others." Common Sense guffawed approbation.

Clotilde was nonplussed only for a moment: "But does *that* make it *right?*?" Again she appealed to the silent, somewhat discredited champion of Common Sense. "Does that make it *right?*?"

"If Ethel don't mind if I say a word or two—my voice ain't quite so stro-o-ong as hers—" Henry hazarded. He seemed to be suffering from pained ennui.

Ethel capitulated with a suddenness that would have disgusted Morality if Morality hadn't got past the point of expecting anything from her. "There, Hen—I been

forgettin' myself again—" She fluttered back to his side, tears were in her eyes and voice. "I know you're not stro-ong, and I'm forgettin', too, all you been through this afternoon—enough to lay out a real peart man, for all you're so *nervy*—Hen—" She took his sagging arm in both hands, giving way to uncontrollable sobs; he shook like a sapling in the wind under the burden of her grief. "Oh—Hen—say you forgive me for—for for-gett-tt-in' myself! And you all *weak* what with *pullin'* an' *blood-lettin'*—"

"There, you had good cause—I ain't sayin' but what you had good cause," he comforted her, maintaining his balance with some effort. "It come on you suddenlike. Why, it clean knocked me out when I first heard of it —me, a man. You've done awful well, Ethel, not to get more upset than what you have."

"No—I been weak—foolish—" insisted Ethel, in gulping gasps.

"You wouldn't a-been a woman, if you hadn't been."

"No. I s'pose not. I s'pose not, Hen." She bent and affectionately wiped her eyes and nose on the shoulder of his best coat. "There now—we all got our senses back, anyway," Henry comforted her uncomfortably. "Brace up now, Ethel; this young lady has asked us a question, and it deserves an answer—a fair, square answer." Henry became judicial.

"The question she asks is whether, just because some children has had to bear their parents' sins, that makes it right. And the answer is no, that *don't* make it right. You're *wrong*, Ethel, if you think it *does!*"

"Yes, Hen."

"I was just about to say, when you forgot yourself, Ethel—" The jab was gentle and, if not then necessary, might help to reduce the dangers of a future occasion. "I was just about to say, it seemed like to me that the whole thing was this: I got a responsibility to you, Ethel—the biggest responsibility, o' course, seein's you're my wife, and a man's wife comes first—I hope you'd agree with that, Miss Clotilde?"

"Yes—I would."

"And I got another responsibility to this young lady here. Now, the whole thing's how to make them two responsibilities gibe—tell me if I'm wrong, I'm ready to stand c'rected if I don't hit the nail fair on the head!"

Ethel hastily anticipated praise from another quarter: "You *do*, Hen—you hit it right *square* on the *head*."

"And, Miss Clotilde—"

"I ag-gree," said Clotilde, between chattering teeth. Truth, beautiful and inviolable Truth, had gone out of the proceedings. The whole matter of claiming her father seemed to the tired and chilly girl to have descended to a sordid, uninspiring plane. She foresaw a haggling over details, compromises, sickening compromises and reservations. She was hungry, disgusted, worn out; she wanted to go home.

"Well, then—" Henry gave his new hat a hitch forward. "I think the best thing we can all do is just to go along, and think it all over, sleep on it a couple nights, then have another talk. How about it?"

"Hen's right!" asserted Ethel.

"I ag-gree," shivered Clotilde.

"I'd just like to see you, Ethel, shake hands with Miss Clotilde afore we go," said the old man. "You both

got good heads, and I don't think either of you's goin' to worry too long over by-gones, once you get your heads to work. I think you might's well be friends right now as later. Go over there and shake hands with her, Ethel —don't be bashful—she'll be glad to have you—you know I ginly give you purty good advice, if I do say it myself as shouldn't. Go on—shake hands with her. Might invite her up to see us some afternoon soon, too, seein's we've agreed to talk it all over together. Go on —you know the chores ain't done—we'd rightly ought to be movin' along—go on, Ethel!"

And Ethel did.

Common Sense and Morality, looking like a prosperous commercial traveler and a leading anti-suffragist, had dinner at the Woodbridge Inn.

"Awful botch, wasn't it?" complained Common Sense, over the soup.

"Terrible," admitted Morality, "even though you know I can't agree with you as to the cause of the botch."

"If each of us—including poor dilapidated Truth—could only get one simon-pure disciple and set 'em at it, we might find out something," said Common Sense. "But, I confess, I don't know where I could lay my hands on one. The country's going to the dogs."

"Worse than the dogs—to hell direct," declared Morality. "My only ray of hope is the awful mess they made of Truth—and her exponent was rather more of a flivver than either of ours, wasn't she? Poor old Truth! She has a harder time of it than either of us more sensible and conventional divinities among these preposterous mortals!"

But Clotilde had already caught up with Truth, was holding her hand in her closed carriage, making extravagant promises to her, and Truth, nestling beneath her eider-down and steamer-rug, was a trifle comforted.

## CHAPTER IX

### CY WETMORE GAVE A PARTY, AND ALL THE BUCKS WERE THERE

"EVERYBODY's here now but the Major and Arthur Kling," said Cy Wetmore, jiggling about in the road in front of the house he rented for a studio, jiggling about in company with a score of other bright young, middle-aged, and oldish men; the night was chilly, and they didn't want to enter Cy's house, from the front windows of which the lift and flicker of an open fire beckoned good cheer, until the party was complete. There are some parties so carefully arranged that they need to burst full-blown, without that straggling effect so common to less artistic parties.

Oliver James remarked: "Of course, Arthur might easily lose himself between his home and here, or forget where he was going; but it's queer about the Major. He's usually so *prompt* to his *meals*."

"Oh, Oliver!" called Jack Stokes, in a highty-tighty voice: "do let me slap you on the wrist!"

"Never—you might derange my wrist-watch, you brute!" objected Oliver. He was a slight, delicate-faced, red-headed, bespectacled youth, a designer of tapestries for the Herter Looms, and an authority on Gobelins. Jack Stokes, corduroyed, flannel-shirted, ruddy-faced and robust as a young farmhand, did landscape pochades in his better hours, and designed linoleum in his worst.

"Cut out the rough stuff!" the giver of the party warned them; "here comes a girl."

The girl came mincing up the road, self-consciously bobbing her head from side to side as she walked; she wore a white dress, a large, fluffy hat of some slimpsey material that sagged around her face, and white shoes and stockings. Straight up to the group of staring youths, old and young, she minced. "Oh, boys, do you think an unprotected little girl is safe around Woodbridge?" she asked, in a squeaky, falsetto voice, putting an embarrassed forefinger in her mouth.

"Goo' Lord!" commented someone.

"Wow—it's the Major!" announced someone else.

They guffawed, and gathered around him. "Well, is the gang all here?" asked the Major, in his natural husky bass. "I suppose I'm late—got here sooner if I hadn't met old Eph Shultis down the road—I said:" The Major's voice took on a mincing squeak. "'Good evening Mr. Shultis!' And simpered at him." The Major's voice became natural again. "And held out my hand, and the old buck stood there squeezin' it, and tellin' me he didn't exactly remember me—Huh-huh!" rumbled the Major. He hoped to be in France, under Pershing, by spring, in spite of his fifty-odd years, and the rheumatism started by a bolo puncture in his shoulder. The party was in the nature of a farewell celebration both for him and Wetmore.

"Everybody's here but Arthur Kling," announced Cy; "it's eight-ten, and everybody was warned to be on the dot of eight sharp. I guess we'll go in."

"Forward, march!" ordered the Major.

They went in through the wide, maple-shaded lawn to

the little tumbledown white cottage that had served as a studio for two generations of Woodbridge artists. The house was near the Skuyterkill, on the south side of the village, and no houses were nearer than two hundred yards on either side: it was a comparatively proper place for a proper Woodbridge stag.

Wetmore opened the front door. "*Entrez, messieurs!*" he pronounced, and stood at attention on the rickety little porch till the last of his guests had stromped inside. "I call it a house-cleaning party," he explained, following them. "The idea is to preserve the furniture —which I don't own."

There was no furniture in the big living-room, neither furniture, carpet, pictures, nor curtains. Except for one detail, the room was as bare as if prepared for a conscientious Woodbridge house-cleaning. The detail consisted of a geometrical arrangement on the worn puncheon floor, in front of the fireplace. A huge galvanized iron washtub, new and shining, stood in the exact center of a circle of bright new tin cups, twenty-two of them, one for each guest. The tub was full to the brim of liquor, fiery-red, on whose potent surface floated several cakes of ice. The glancing firelight gleamed on this Brobdignagian bowl. Groans, grunts, "Wows!" and "Woofs!" of admiration greeted the achievement. Never, since the days of Rip Van Winkle, had such a punch been set before Woodbridge mortal.

"Be seated, gentlemen!" begged Cy Wetmore, waving a hospitable hand at the bare floor: "Be seated, toss-pots and pantagruelists all, and taste of my cheer!"

They sat down, in knickers and puttees, in corduroy and khaki trousers, in spats and sweaters and golf-stock-

ings and patent-leather pumps, each beside the tin cup that marked his place in the circle. The Major's cropped gray bullet-head bent forward beside the rising auburn locks of Ollie James, the spreading gray mop of the hermit-symbolist towered between the bald pate of Henry Partridge, who might have painted well but for too much income combined with an interest in racing cars, and the neat brown coiffure of Allan Brooke, whose snowscapes were bound to win him an N. A. before he was many years older. Carey Beemis, with the only unfestive face on view, sat with his back to the fire. He expected to leave, as soon as things got so boisterous that his leaving wouldn't be noticed, be motored down to Kingston, and take a night train for New York.

"The cheer looks—rather terrific," mentioned the hermit, in his neat, precise, Harvard English.

"What I'm wonderin'," growled the Major, "'swhere Cy got the price. There must be two hundred dollars' worth of dope in that mess!"

There was a certain animosity in the Major's frankness. Cy Wetmore looked up from gently stirring the concoction with a long-handled dipper. "Remembering that it was war times," he announced, "I was not extravagant. Don't let your patriotism give you any twinges, Major. This punch—this supreme achievement in Woodbridge punches, if I may modestly state an evident fact—" He delicately allowed some of the liquor to trickle from the dipper back into the washtub; a scarlet froth appeared. He was a dapper young man, high and bold of forehead, beady black and twinkling of eye, and he kept his cherubic smile and sense of humor despite ten years of steady failure as a cubist. He had enlisted

in the navy, some three months before; two days' leave of absence had enabled him to prepare a farewell party to his Woodbridge comrades, a party that should be memorable in the annals of the village, if not of the country. He continued, intoning the words: "This potent and virile liquor—it did not cost two hundred dollars—nor a hundred—nor yet fifty. I will not tell you how much it cost—I will only say that it is a truly war-time and economical punch; its flavor, its ability to deliver the goods, I leave entirely to your individual and composite judgments."

He poured again, creating more scarlet froth. "Major—let me have your cup; I think it is ready," he said, and his announcement had such an air of solemnity that no heart in that assemblage but beat the faster for it.

In dead silence he filled the Major's cup, till the beaded ripples were winking at the brim: dexterously, in further silence that his air of solemnity intensified, he filled the other cups.

"A toast!" he proclaimed, rising from his knees where he had devotionally performed the service of cup-bearer, holding his flashing tin goblet high above his head, sudden ardor on his firelit face. "The democratic army and navy of the United States of America! Bottoms up!"

The upraised cup swept downward in a semicircle; he drank, face upturned, his slim white throat gulping. A thrill went through the assembly.

"That's a toast that's got to be drunk standing!" snapped the Major, with the gruff finality of a military command, and scrambled to his feet. The others fol-

lowed, some hesitating, more carried away. The Major looked doubtfully at the scarlet half-pint of stuff in his hand, looked with doubt that lasted only while Jack Stokes could shout, "That's a toast I'd drink in prussic acid!" raised it to his lips, and drank. The others followed, some precipitate, others lagging but grim and determined, like raw soldiers going over the top; all except the hermit. Nothing could stampede his placid opinions. After a series of parties the chief ingredient of which it had been the giver's aim to make a nearer approximation of liquid fire than any previous giver's, the hermit, good patriot that President Wilson and Prussianism had made out of his pacifism, was minded to go slow. He tasted his cup; a look of relief, of pleased surprise overspread his bearded face, and he drank the rest with a right good will.

"Gr-uff!" growled the Major, finishing his beaker, getting the flavor of it. Faint surprise, pleased or otherwise, showed on his round face. It was repeated, with individual variations, on the faces of the rest.

Cy Wetmore stood dangling his cup, politely waiting for the verdict. There was a general turning of eyes toward the Major. He was a recognized connoisseur.

"Uh-uff!" he said, after suitable time spent in deliberation. "I guess I've got it. Just let me—" He strode forward and dipped up another cupful of the stuff. "—make sure." He drank half the cup in slow mouthfuls, rolling it over his experienced tongue. "Hasheesh!" He turned to the hermit. "Right, Alfred?"

"It has the faintly bitterish flavor—" admitted the hermit.

"Uh—what was—" hesitated Jack Stokes.

"*Hasheesh!*!" The Major was not accustomed to explanations. "It used to raise hell over in the Philippines. It's got other stuff in it, but it's the hash that gives it the kick. Notice the effect?" He looked around the circle of variously blank or enlightened faces.

"It gives you a cold feeling—in the pit of the stomach," submitted Allan Brooke respectfully.

"That's it! Cold in the stomach, and round the heart—first effect," the Major elucidated. "Then—extraordinary vividness of sensation—alcohol's nothing to it. After 'bout six or eight hours you go to sleep for a week—or for longer if you got a weak heart. Guess there must a-been *hasheesh* in the stuff Rip Van Winkle got poured into him somewhere round in these Catskills—congratulate you, Cy! But it's no stuff for a weak heart." The Major scooped up another cupful. "Now I want to give you a toast, one that should a-come first—not knocking Wetmore, who's only a civilian—Fill up, dip into the tank—the dipper's too slow. Fill up!"

While they filled up, still with varying degrees of doubt, Cy Wetmore put in: "I ought to tell you fellows, since I see some of you looking doubtful, that I consulted five physicians—count 'em, five—four in Kingston, and one here—before I mixed this concoction—and they all agreed a gallon of it wouldn't hurt an infant. The proportion of *hasheesh* is so slight that—"

"What do any o' these backwoods saw-bones know about *hasheesh?*!" interrupted the Major: he had been brevetted a Colonel, but he preferred the familiar Major, modest man that he was in all but his opinions. "You got enough in there for a mule-size kick—that's all we

care about. Ready, boys? I give you—President o' these United States!"

Truth, that survives even at the bottom of a well, surmounted even the Major's ridiculous girl-costume, rose resplendent above his solid gray head—the truth about that roomful's feeling for their chosen commander. They did not cheer: they set their faces grimly, lifted their exotic concoction as if it had been nobler stuff, held their shining cups in a high circle, until, following the Major's lead, they put the brims to their lips and drank off the draft.

"Of course, we're just here to have one last good hell of a time," explained the Major, answering a widespread demand, "knowin' that we may not see each other again for a while, anyway." He had, in an emotional moment, expressed the hope that he might leave his old bones in the soil of France, and, somehow, the knowledge of that had got around. "But we're the better for a couple of serious toasts. Just the same, there's plenty of serious stuff comin' to all of us—to those of us that stay, as well as to those that go. Let's all sit down again, and drink one, bottoms up, to good old Woodbridge, and have a song or two." He dipped his cup in the unlowered flood of iced scarlet, kicked up his skirts at the hermit, ballet-dancer fashion, and sat down. "Excuse me, Wetmore—seems I been kinda usurpin' your pr'ogatives," he apologized, with sudden contrition, across the punch bowl.

"I want you to feel this is your party, as well as mine, Major," said Wetmore, considerably moved. "You be toastmaster."

"Wetmore's a fine fellow," Jack Stokes informed Bruno, the sculptor.

"Never knew a finer; and, say, the Major's got the right stuff in him, too, hasn't he?" said Bruno.

"The Major—let's make our next toast the Major!" bellowed Henry Partridge, overhearing them.

"Ya-ya!" ascended the chorus of assent. "The Major!"

"Did somebody say this stuff didn't have a *kick*?" grumbled the Major. "Crazy all ready! But it's nothin' to what's comin'! Wetmore showed intelligence to remove the furniture." He complained, raising his voice above the hubbub: "No—Woodbridge first—then Wetmore—"

"No, the Major!" "But Woodb'idge—dea' ole Woodb'idge—" "The Major!" "Whichever one we drink, it's got to be drunk standin'—it's no toast to sit down to!" "Right-oh! Everybody up!" "The Major!" "Ya-ya!"

They tramped on the bare floor to make a noise, getting to their feet, crowding around to dip into the washtubful of flat-tasting, bitterish liquor. Already they had reached the furniture-endangering stage. The house shook with their exhilarated altercation. Someone threw a tin cup against the stone front of the fireplace.

"*Hasheesh*—wonderful stuff," commented the Major to his bosom friend, the hermit, looking them over with the eye of an expert. "We gotta be ready to jump in if they start smashing each other up—*hasheesh* is hell on the combative instincts. Prussians give it to their soldiers, y'know."

"Do they?" commented the hermit, genially amused, screeching a little to be heard above the uproar.

"Calm down, fellows, calm down!" advised the

sculptor, Bruno, in his voice of bass and thunder; it was the chorus of most Woodbridge stags, an incentive to larger effort.

"Hey—we'll put it to a vote!" yelled Wetmore, getting attention by violence of voice and violent waving of his arms. "All in favor of the Major signify by saying, 'Aye!'" The "Ayes" loosened the plaster on the walls. "It's the Major!" decreed Wetmore, starting a fresh outburst. He dodged over, caught the Major by the arm, and dragged him to the vicinity of the punch-bowl. "I give you—" he raised his cup and paused until a few yowls of enthusiasm had subsided. "I give you Woodbridge's best poet, best artificer of metals, best fighter—the Major!"

They drank, gurgling with their suppressed noise-creators, and let loose with a roar when their third half-pint of Woodbridge's largest, hardest-hitting punch had gone to join the other two. "What's the matter with the Major?" they all demanded at once, and shrieked the obvious answer.

"It's the *hasheesh*," explained the Major, deeply moved, to the sculptor. "See how it hits—quick as a flash?"

"It does seem to be pretty potent," admitted the sculptor. "I don't think I can stand much more of it."

The Major suggested: "Pour it out the window if it's too strong for you."

"I've tried both windows—they're nailed down," explained the sculptor; he was a sober, righteous, hard-working young man, even though his wife was an analytical chemist in New York, with only week-ends at home.

The Major chuckled. "I reckon Cy didn't want any of his stuff to go out without first goin' in," he surmised. "Wow!" he added abruptly, widening his usually small mouth till it extended from ear to ear, opening and shutting it like a large, thirsty fish regretting absence of water. "Wow, wow!"

"Ooh-wow!" responded the sober and righteous young man, at once infected with the Major's complaint. "Well, it does a fellow good to loosen up once in a while—"

"Where's a kitchen chair?" demanded a high-pitched, excited voice, above the general din of wowing, mutual agreement that it did fellows good to loosen up once in a while, and exclamation over the potency of the flat-tasting, utterly remarkable infusion of *hasheesh*. "Aw, have a drink!" suggested several voices.

"Kitchen chair!" insisted the possessor of the high-pitched, excited voice: he was Amos Frink, they made out—T. Amos Frink, as he signed his pictures, a fine solid youth with the chest and upper arms of a young Hercules. "I gotta have a kitchen chair—Brooke's bet me a dollar a kitchen chair won't go through that side window!"

"Hey, a bet!" "Shut up—what's going on!" "Sure, it'll go through—what—a kitchen chair?" "It will not—you don't know how narrow they made the windows of these old houses." "Well, I'll bet you a dollar it won't!" "Kitchen chair!" insisted Amos, prowling about the room. "Where's that kitchen door—hey, Cy—where's the door—where you got your kitchen chairs?"

"Right this way—I loaded all the furniture into the

kitchen,'" Wetmore obligingly informed him, torn from an argument as to the relation of hasheesh and opium with the badly informed but inquisitive Jack Stokes. The rest of them trooped after him and Amos. Two or three adventurous spirits, noting the little angular stairway leading up from a corner of the kitchen, proceeded upward to see what they could see.

With the kitchen chair—they chose one containing a small oil stove without bothering to remove the stove—Amos returned to the living room. He put the chair and stove down some six feet from the shut and nailed window, took off his sweater, and proceeded to roll up his shirt sleeves over his bronzed and brawny arms.

"Shall I open the window for you?—only a few nails—" offered Wetmore politely.

"The idea," explained Amos, additionally exhilarated by being the cynosure of all eyes, "Cy is to put the chair *through* the window. Now, I'm goin' to put the oil stove through along with it—just for good measure!"

The idea, which evidently didn't involve any preliminary opening of the window, penetrated the gaping circle of onlookers, and drew enthusiastic whoops. While the whoops were still in progress, there came a clatter as of an explosion in a tin factory from the direction of the kitchen; the three adventurers reappeared from the upper regions, bearing numerous tin pans, executing a war dance, making barbarous sounds suitable to a stag.

"My landlord's sap pans," explained Cy Wetmore philosophically, to the hermit.

"Oh, don't worry—we'll take up a collection tomorrow

to defray damages—as usual,” the hermit reassured him.

“Stop the jamboree!” bawled Amos, with some irritation. “This bet has got to be decided first.”

“Amos is going to put the chair, with the oil stove in it, through the window—Brooke bet him a dollar he couldn’t,” explained Ollie James, to the three returning discoverers. Carey Beemis was one of them; his face had lost its drawn look; he was quite drunk, and happy.

Amos went on with his preparations. He tried lifting the chair by the back, with his hands near the top of the curved wooden upright. “That’s good!” he announced. “Gives me a swing, that does! Say, are you a’ready?”

“A’ready!” “Sure, go to it!” “You can do it, Amos!” “Look out, Amy, or the stove’ll fall on your head!” “Ya-hoo—Ya-hoo—all ready for the big show!” “You got a glass arm, Amy—you can’t even hit the window!”

“Don’t bother me—stand back!” bawled Amos. “I can do it—though I’d like to bet another dollar there isn’t another man in the room can.”

He looked around; there were no takers. Carey Beemis, waving his tin sap pan, rolled up to him. “Wait—it’ll be a strain, o’ man!” He held out a brimming cupful of punch. “Have ‘nother drink before you try!”

“Goo’ idea!” admitted Amos, accepting the punch.

“Here’s to Amos—and may he put ‘er through!” toasted some pro-Amos enthusiast, and everybody drank. “Here’s to that tough old window—may it resist the attack on its virtue!” toasted some anti-Amos-ite, and everybody drank that, too.

“Le’s have a song! Major, make us up a song!”

shouted Cy, perhaps harboring unworthy thoughts of saving the window, and the resultant expense.

"Song—song—Ya-hoo!"

"Wait till I put 'er through!" objected Amos, waving both arms.

"Ya-hoo-hoo! Song!" "Let it go till after we have a song or two and a few more drinks—you'll be all the stronger, Amy!" "Sure—song—Ya-hoo!" "Everybody quiet." "The Major—cut out the noise, fellows—the Major's goin' to make us up a song!" "Here's another, bottoms up, to dea' ole Woo'bidge while we're waitin'!"

They heterogeneously drank, bellowed "Woo'bidge!" "Song!" and "Ya-hoo!" and watched the preparations of the Major.. The Major, sitting cross-legged like a Turk near the punch-bowl, began to compose; he had collected the long-handled dipper, made useless by more expeditious methods in dealing with the punch, and a sap pan. As he composed, in stolid disregard of the din around him, he hummed through his nose, and pounded with the dipper on the pan.

"Hey—I got it!" he shouted, waving his dipper in the air.

They at once Ya-hoo-ed themselves into silence.

"I'll give you the words, then we can all sing it together," he said; and produced the Woodbridge form of limerick which he had originated for the purpose of taking off familiar Woodbridgians at stags. "It's on cutey, over there," he announced, with a fishy grin at Oliver James, the trim and delicately sissified authority on Gobelins. He gave out, beating time with the dipper on the pan:

"We'll sing a song of sweetness,  
Of concentrated neatness,  
Of manicures to cleanse our nails and sins:  
With baths and toe-corn freezers,  
With soap and mustache-tweezers,  
Our Ollie beats the Gold Dust Twins!"

"Wow! Wow! Whoop-la! Ya-hoo!" they applauded, and began to roar it in twenty-one different sharps and flats. On tin pans they swelled the chorus, and with tin pans they beat the blushing Ollie over the head. Tin pans flew against the fireplace front, and walls, knocking off plaster. One adventurous spirit threw his tin-pan against a window, breaking out a pane. Other volleyed pans immediately took flight, breaking out all the remaining panes.

Fortunately it was one of the large front windows, not the narrower side one, through which there was a bet up that Amos Frink couldn't throw a kitchen chair; however, one window, all windows, was the rule; Amos, realizing this certain procedure, got in front of his window in time to stop several tin-pan attempts on it, one with his nose.

"Stop, fellows—have a heart!" he begged frantically, so concerned to have a whole window for his prowess that he didn't notice the accident to his nose. "Cy—for God's sake, Cy—stop 'em! This is *my* window! Where's Cy—stop 'em, Cy!"

Cy responded to this pathetic appeal; a heart of stone could have done no less.

"Sure, it's Amy's window, fellows—have a heart!" Cy told them, with dignity, taking his stand in front of the tormented Amy; Amy, stretched out in front of his window, looked relieved. "Andromache facing the Sea

Monster," commented the hermit, nodding at the window's protector. Being mostly artists, they recognized a caricature on a famous canvas, and roared approval.

"One window goes, all windows go!" howled Jack Stokes, waving a pan.

"Ya-hoo-hoo-Ya!"

"Now, children—now, nice boys—good little Sunday-school scholars!" Cy chided them, in his loudest bellow. "Wait—listen!" The racket subsided a few degrees. "Let Amy have his window—let's be fair to Amy," pleaded Cy. "Be good little boys—and as a reward—we'll soon have a nice bonfire in the front yard! We will make the bonfire out of the front porch—I never cared for the front porch, anyway."

"It really *isn't* artistic, you know," said Ollie James.

"All I ask," continued Cy, after the outburst of plauditory Ya-hoos had subsided, "is, that you don't burn the house down. I don't think we ought to burn the house down."

"Oh, no—of course *not!*" chirped Ollie.

"We must remove the porch before burning it," said Cy. "I will supply axes and crowbars for the purpose. And now—allow me to introduce Amy Frink, in his death-defying feat of putting a kitchen chair, *and* an oil stove—note the oil stove, gentlemen—you are not likely to see it looking so well again, and I don't know how I'll cook my breakfast tomorrow morning—not that it matters—"

"You fellows just give me a minute—say, honest, now, give me a fair chance!" pleaded Amos, from his window.

"We'll try to restrain our natural instincts, Amy!" "Sure, Amy—you got a suspicious disposition!" "Get

out o' the way, Amy—let's have a look at the old window—just a *look!*" they rallied him.

Amy thought better of leaving his window; he was beginning to be irritated. "Any fellow that throws a pan at that window—" he began, goaded to desperation by the poising of several missiles, ready to let fly as soon as he should remove himself. They drowned him out in a delighted chorus of Boo's and Ya-hoos. "Amy's got an evening's job—posing before his window," commented the hermit to the sculptor.

The Major in the meantime had cornered Cy Wetmore to impart a few confidences; the Major had reached a state of repletion with assorted confidences that he was anxious to impart.

"I think you ought to *know*, Cy," mentioned the Major, in an intimate bellow, "that you did a foolish thing, suggestin' burnin' the porch."

"Oh, I kinda thought—might add a touch to evenin's festivities," apologized Cy, in the same intimate over-tone.

"Bad—pre' bad—you got to take into c'nsid'ration effect o' *suggestion!*" stormed the Major. "Hasheesh—it's pre' live stuff when a fellow isn't *used* to it, Cy. Bythway, in c'nfd'ence, Cy, hope I didn't hurt your feelin's, blurtin' out what it was, right off the bat?"

"I had intended to keep 'em in the dark a little longer," admitted Cy, showing signs of being deeply moved; "but it's awright, Major; *anything* you do's awright with me, Major!"

"Well, now, thankee, Cy—it does me good to hear you say it—if it hadn't been I'd had some 'sperience, some little 'sperience, Cy, with *hasheesh*—in the Phil'-

pines, y'know—you'd akep' us all guessin' indefinite. But they was suthin' else I wanted to suggest—suthin' else, in stric'es' c'nf'dence—now what was it, uh?" The Major looked grave and worried.

Cy shook his head; vocal reply would have been useless against the uproar caused by another attempt, on the part of Amos, to leave his window, to get over to the chair that he wanted to put through it. He got back, guarding his fragile property with his body, just in time to stop several sailing sap pans. "Cy!" he wailed, wildly wailed, and threatened: "Where's Cy? Cy, if you don't make these Yahoos let my window alone, I'm goin' to break some of 'em in *two!*"

"Aw, don' mind Amy," the Major advised Cy, in strictest confidence, buttonholing him. "Jus' 'membered what it was—what I wanted to tell you. You'n I ought to get together few others not 'fected too much by your punch—and it's sure the punch *with* the *punch*, Cy—huh-huh—and see they don't burn the house down. That was bad s'gestion you gave, just mentionin' it. Bad s'gestion—few people realize power s'gestion—specially backed up by a shot or two o' *hasheesh!* I'll bet they don't stop till they *burn* this old house to the ground, Cy!"

"Oh—I hardly think—" stammered Cy, almost shocked into sobriety.

"*Hasheesh*—s'gestion—by gorry,—say, is they any 'surance on the old shack?"

"Yes—I think so—few hun'red dollars. But could it be *c'llected*, Major, if we burned it down?"

The Major looked serious. "That's w'at I'm a-gettin' at, Cy. It's gotta be done by accident. I think we 'gree they's argyments in favor of doin' it, Cy?"

"Uh—well—" hesitated Cy, somewhat muddled.

"Think o' the *bla-aze!*!" The Major waved his hand, blazes lighting up his round phiz. "Think o' the *monymen-t* to—to your party, Cy! We've never yet burned a house down at a stag, Cy—even at Brooke's blowout we saved the house! We gotta attain a climax, Cy—it might's well be now—last stag—some of us may never be at 'nother Woo'b'idge stag, Cy!"

"It's true, Major—it's gospel truth!" admitted Cy, moved almost to tears. He put his hand on the Major's shoulder, the light of a great and burning decision was in his eyes. "We'll do it, Major—we'll burn 'er to the ground!"

"I knew you'd see it right." Now that the great decision had been made, the Major's head bowed beneath a weight of grim, inexorable determination. "Nothin' else would justify that punch—that hash punch of yours, Cy—that grand achievement—and, contrariwise, that punch would justify nothin' less. We got to have a holocaust! They's such a thing as artistic ensemble, Cy!"

"They is, Major—'swhat I've strove for—with-out success—years'n years!"

"It'll be a memory to carry away—this party, Cy! When you feel the cold water of the Channel closin' in on you—torpedoed—goin' down by your gun as you'll do, Cy—I know you, boy—"

"Major—if I don't come back, you'll know, all of you will know—I didn't—disgrace ole Woo'b'idge!"

"It goes without sayin', boy, it goes without sayin'!"

They were silent, full of true and deep emotion, in the midst of a renewed outburst and infernal racket precipi-

tated by Amy's fifth attempt to leave his window. Carey Beemis kindly brought him another cup of punch to keep his spirits up. Amy consumed it, keeping a distracted eye, the eye of a mother hen whose chickens are threatened by a dozen shrieking hawks, on his tormentors.

Ollie James, after a period of retirement in one corner, appeared, announcing shrilly: "I got a limerick, fellows—on the Major! Hey, anybody wanna hear my limerick?"

Nobody was much interested. "Soapy Ollie!" "Go down to the brook, Ollie, and have a bath—there's soap and sapolio in the kitchen!" "Get a manicurist for Ollie." "Hey—the Major's a girl—he'd make a fine manicurist for Ollie!" "Major—Ollie wants you to manicure his nails!" "Squeeze his hand a little, while you're doin' it, uh, Major?"

Ollie discovered the Major, and shouted out his limerick:

"Our Major is not scary—  
At home he'll never tarry  
While Germany is teasing U. S. A.  
But how'll the Major bear a  
Army dry as the Sahara,  
With lemonade and Woo'b'idge far away?"

The Major, resisting renewed demands that he manicure Ollie at once, drew the youth aside to impart a confidence. The Major was full of confidences.

"That's a purty good limerick, for all none of 'em noticed it, a purty good limerick, boy," the Major confided to him.

"Uh—thank you, Major," Ollie responded, glad to escape manicuring.

"But I jus' wanna tell you, strictes' conf'dence, Ollie," the Major continued, "that I don't 'preciate references to my fondness for strong drink—not but what I may 'a' deserved 'em, from time to time, Ollie."

"But, Major, 'twas only a joke—" apologized Ollie, delicately pink for regret as a newly washed infant. "I wasn't intimatin'—"

The Major declared: "In strictes' conf'dence, Ollie, I'm proud an' glad the Army's dry as the Sahara—not a drop o' anything stronger'n water'll pass my lips after I get into harness again, Ollie! Not a drop!"

"Sure not, Major: I was only—"

Amy Frink came charging into their vicinity, a combination of full-back bucking the line and prize fighter run amuck. In warding off a tin pan bound for his nose, Amy had overlooked another one simultaneously bound for his stomach. Patience could bear no more; he charged, the crowd scattered, scattered at least as far as the Major and Ollie, who were too much occupied with the subject of prohibition to note the approach of danger.

Amy collided with Ollie, seized Ollie in the neighborhood of the belt, and over they went. The punch bowl received them, at least the upper half of each of them, with Ollie in the position of greatest danger and wetness.

"Hey—stop it!" The Major, meeting the emergency, dived for collars, brought Amy out, threw him backward onto the floor, brought Ollie up, supported his slight figure upright, dribbling streamlets of rich red punch on the floor.

"What you doin'—mind your step!" bellowed the

Major, glaring at Amy; Amy sat and sputtered and gasped in the midst of a hilariously admiring circle. "If it had been anybody but Ollie, you might a-spoiled the punch!" roared the Major. "Ollie's sanitary—had a bawth—this very mornin'—soaped all over, didn't you, Ollie?" demanded the Major, shaking the youth to make him speak.

"Goo'—goo' gracious!" sputtered Ollie.

"See, he says yes!" The Major released him, and gave his attention to the endangered punch. He scooped up a pint or two in a tin sap pan—the tin cups had been generally discarded in favor of the more capacious pans—and tasted it.

"'Sall right!" he announced. "Tastes a trifle *soapy*—that's all! Ollie, you ought to use more water in rinsin' off! Not but what we ought to be thankful it was a nice sanitary person like yourself—s'pose Alfred had gone in?" He turned toward the hermit. Bellows of approval, yowls and howls and hee-haws of appreciation rewarded him—the hermit, Ollie, everybody. Pans dipped into the remaining twenty gallons of punch, lips tasted, voices commented: "Say, no joke—it does taste a little soapy—just a little, but really—soapy!" "Aw, come off!" "No—no joke—taste it *slow!*" "Say—maybe it does—or is it just our imagination?" "Power o' s'gestion—and *hasheesh!*" put in the Major, commanding the uproar by military bearing and super-military voice. "'Minds me—say!—'minds me, fellows—we're going to burn the house down! Want to warn you—say, be quiet a minute, this is serious!—want to warn you not to go to sleep 'round the place—ev'ybody out—when we give the word—"

"Woo-oo—ruff!" bellowed Amy, with the sudden terrific vigor and determination of an enraged bull. He had seized the opportunity to square himself off, chair and stove swinging before him, in front of his miraculously preserved window. There was triumph in his bellow. Without wasting time in more than one preliminary swing, he brought chair and stove up over his head in a sweeping three-quarters circle, released them at the level of the window-top, so that they shot downward and forward, crashed through the window as a big stone from a blast crashes through a hotbed frame, bearing away panes and wooden cross-pieces, leaving a magnificent large hole.

Pandemonium worse pandemoniumized broke loose. Ollie promptly poured a panful of punch on Amy's head, and Amy accepted it gratefully, proudly, as a proper chrism of victory. Some of them remembered about the fire, and mixed bellows, questions, cuss-words about that with the counter currents started by Amy's heroic achievement. They beat on tin pans, pounded on the bare floor with their heels, impartially drank punch and poured it over each other.

"This—this is getting too much for me!" announced the hermit, in a shriek, to the Major, providentially colliding with him near the fireplace. The Major was poking at the mass of blazing embers, poking at them, immersed in thoughts that made him flinty-faced and gruff. "We ought to do it," he said, "before they get much worse—while they still got enough sense to get out—when that hash begins to make 'em dopy—"

"Hey?" screamed the hermit, seeing that the Major's lips were moving.

"I say—those hoodlums—look at 'em—" The Major straightened up, and waved his hand at the mêlée, raised his voice to a roar. "We can't get 'em out pretty soon—they'll begin to collapse—and if the house should get afire—"

His voice was plainly audible; the uproar was dying down. It continued to die down until there was only the methodical beating of one fist on one tin pan to break the silence; in a far corner, Angus Andrew MacDonald was blissfully beating away and singing to himself:

"It's up with the bonnets o' bonnie Dundee!"

"Cut out that noise!" called a sharp voice from the new center of interest, silent interest, near the window that Amy's chair had gone through.

"Huh?" queried the Major, striding forward.

"Come fill up my cup, and come fill up my pan-pam! Pam!" chanted Angus, in a happy dreamland of his own. The Major pressed forward, and blinked at the window. A woman's face, a girl's face, Clotilde's face, was framed by the jagged opening: the face showed unnaturally white and clear-cut against the darkness outside. There was an unnatural calmness over it, an exaltation, a gleaming of the steady dark eyes.

"Come saddle my horses, and call out my men—Pam! Pam!" chanted Angus' voice, behind, sufficiently loud, now that the other uproar had stopped, to fill the room with sound.

"Shut up!" snapped and crackled the Major's voice; the chanting ended at that.

"I'm sorry to interrupt you," said Clotilde; "but the

fact is, Helen Hope has killed herself. We could hear you—and I thought you ought to know." She paused, seemed about to say more, caught a glimpse of Carey Beemis' face, and flashed away.

Somebody dropped a sap pan a little while afterward; shortly after that all of those who still had pans carried them over and put them down in the corner of the room vacated by Angus, nesting them carefully, neatly together. Ollie James' pan was so dinted and bent that he couldn't make it nest with the others. He put it down on the floor and tried to get it into shape again by pressing it down with his heel, working carefully so as not to make any unnecessary noise. Several others stood, with folded arms, and watched him.

"Well—it's too damned bad—that's about all a man can say," muttered the Major at the end of five speechless minutes. Then they all began to talk together, in subdued voices. "Too bad." "It seems impossible." "She had a studio over there across the brook, didn't she?" The hermit mentioned thoughtfully to the Major: "Speaking of a death's head at the feast—" He looked around at the bewildered revellers. "Boys, maybe we shouldn't discuss it now," he said gently; "it's no fit subject to discuss except in strict sobriety, and we're all drunk. I move we just go home to bed."

Many of them nodded. "That's a good idea." "He's right." "Let's go home," they said.

Cy Wetmore, standing with his hands behind him, back to the fire, protested slowly: "We're not so drunk, perhaps—at least we're not drunk on my *hasheesh*. If we're drunk, it's largely on analogies—and psychological suggestion. We can get over that—if we haven't already

got over it." He smiled tolerantly at their mystification. "That famous punch," he said, "it consists of two dozen of those red vegetable coloring tablets that come with gelatine, forty gallons of pure water, and a little castile soap to give it a bead—and flavor. I intended to tell you, as soon as you all got drunk enough."

There was only one comment, a thoughtful, penitential sniff, that might have pertained just as well to a more important matter, from the Major.

Someone asked, after a few more "Too bads" and similar comments had made speaking easier: "Who was it—that brought the news?"

"Miss Clotilde Westbrook—she's visiting the Klings," said Sammy Talbot.

"That's probably the reason Arthur didn't come—it must have happened before we—began," surmised Ollie James.

"She looked cold as ice, didn't she?" It was Jack Stokes' comment. "She might have been announcing anything but that. Sort of—victorious."

Sammy Talbot put in, nervously: "She's a fine girl. Her mother came with the first students. She's very modern—ah." He subsided foolishly; he had been thinking, and he had been stirred to say something by that mention of Clotilde's cold, victorious look. He had thought of Carey Beemis' presence, and of Edna's voluble fears for Helen Hope if Carey turned to Clotilde, and yielded to a feeling that he ought to say something. His eyes furtively sought for Carey Beemis.

Beemis was standing, hands in his pockets, head bowed, near Cy Wetmore, over at one end of the fireplace. He caught Sammy's eye. As if the look had been a demand,

or a challenge, he lifted his head, came a step forward.

"Well—if I'm not drunk—and I certainly don't feel drunk," he said, "I hope you fellows will forgive me if I make a little statement about—this—tragedy. Some of you may feel that I ought to explain—anyway, I feel myself that I ought to; and I will; if there are no objections?"

He seemed neither broken, nor hardened, nor even greatly affected. Like an amateur actor in a difficult scene, there was an automaton-like forcelessness about him. A partial explanation of that came out immediately: "The fact is, I've been expecting this might happen for some time—I've even composed a statement of my side of the case—and it's substantially that statement that I—I would like to deliver—in justification—in explanation—"

He stumbled over the last words, came gradually to a distressed silence; he had the look of a man whose desultory conversation has been interrupted by an occurrence suspiciously resembling sudden death, half a mile away. "The failure of an experiment does not vitiate a law." He said it with an air of utter abstraction, the air of one recently under chloroform, and paused again, staring, listening. The men in the room were silent, motionless, wooden-faced: the speech-maker's appearance of staring, of listening, had to do with nothing there.

He seemed, with an effort, to become aware of them, aware that he had started to make a statement to them, even, at last, aware of the nature of the statement. He apologized:

"No—I was wrong. It's quite different. It makes no difference—none whatever. I do not care to make a statement, after all. I had no idea as to how it would be. Advance ideas are frequently inadequate. So I hope you will excuse me."

Staring, listening, frowning heavily, he went out.

## CHAPTER X

### A WATCH IN THE NIGHT

THERE was a music, a solemn sound as of men's voices in a distant Gregorian chant, breathing from the upper branches of the pines. They were old pines, tall, resonant with years and wind-broken branches, chanting their melancholy harmonies, a night-song just this side of silence, murmuring together beneath the stars, in the starry darkness at the village's southward fringe. A century had passed since they were seedlings, a quarter of a century had passed since they raised a Druid chorus over the conception of Clotilde Hooghtyling. She looked up to them, listened to them, in passing, and loved them with the thrilling intimacy that was her birthright. How tall and straight and dignified and unconquerable they stood up in the night!

Tall and straight and calmly dignified as if she had been blood-kin with them, she paused among them, near the row of palely gleaming stepping stones that crossed the kill. The monotonous burbling of the little river, the swelling and falling of the chant of the pines: and, everywhere else, silence, wide, velvety, pall-like, complete. A veritable sympathy, a benediction of understanding and peace, in star-hung darkness, in chanting pines, in the faint, tinkling accompaniment of the moving water. "Ora pro nobis!" whispered the woman, from the

strangely calm fullness of her heart. “*Sancta—Sancta Natura—ora pro nobis—et libera nos!*”

Kneeling on the nearest stepping stone she bent down for a sip of the clear, cool brook water, to wet her finger-tips and feel the coolness on her temples. There was a spiritual and bodily communion in partaking of the water, as if there had been in the deed something of an ancient religious rite. Made at once more humble and more proud, she crossed the brook, followed a brookside path for a few hundred feet, and returned to the brook-side studio. Quietly, but without stealthiness, she let herself into the living-room; Arthur and Edna and Helen were exactly as she had left them, all wonderfully calm, and yet all with a worried little under-air of waiting. Helen Hope’s marble-white face, resting at ease on a sofa cushion of crimson velvet, with her closed eyelids puckered a little by being tightly pressed together, as when they had found her, especially had the look of waiting. Her bullet had missed its mark by the tenth part of an inch, severing the aorta; death must have been a little delayed.

Arthur looked up vacantly, and said: “Well—your mission seems to have been effective.” He was sitting beside Edna, in front of a lively open fire, holding her hand.

“Oh, yes—I had only to tell them,” said Clotilde. She drew a comfortable brown wicker chair up to the fire and sat down at Edna’s other side.

“I should have insisted, dear, that Arthur go,” said Edna, looking up regretfully; her little face seemed old, weazened, lightless. “But I was simply all shot to pieces. I couldn’t bear the thought of his leaving me—

it was because he saw how I was feeling that he was so lukewarm in offering to go."

"Oh, I enjoyed the little walk; the air's wonderful tonight. And I think I understood how you felt, dear." Clotilde glanced over at Helen. "Perhaps I shouldn't have urged that we leave her face uncovered; but it seemed such a little while since she'd been—just one of us, you know—"

Edna assented hastily, with a little shudder: "I think it was right—it was thoughtful and beautiful of you, Clo', to think of it. Only my miserable rotten nerves—really, I *am* all shot to Hell!"

Arthur put in mildly, pressing her hand: "Really, dearie, I don't think you ought to—cuss-words, you know."

"Why shouldn't I, if it relieves my nerves? Helen always enjoyed my cussing—even though she'd never take my advice to take it up." Edna's drooping spirits revived a little. "You know, Clo', dear, she absolutely refused to swear, smoke, or drink. All the nerve-relaxing vices—including conventional lying and conventional keeping her mouth shut—she refused them all. Said that modern women must show that they could get along without those vicious helps that most *men* have found so necessary—not to mention a lot of unmodern women—like myself. She never spared herself—any test—any danger—in many ways she was hard as nails—hard as those Christian Science women that are always going to pieces with nerves—if she'd only compromised a little—if she'd only not tried to do everything at once—Oh, Clo', I loved her—I know she was a fool, but I *loved* her, Clo'!"

"There — dearie — sweetie pet mustn't!" Arthur soothed her.

"If she'd only found a *man*—a real man, who'd have loved and appreciated her!" said Clotilde. "She had to make the fight—alone."

"That was the whole trouble, I think," said Arthur, nervously smoothing his retreating chin. "It needs a more perfect breed of men—uh—than we've yet developed—it seems to me—to live up to the ideals of—you ultra-modern women."

The remark was directed at Clotilde. "There are not many like *you*, Arthur," she told him, with sufficiently whole-hearted admiration to confuse him a little. "Oh, really, I'm under no illusions as to the variety of—of hairpin that I am," he objected; "besides, I doubt whether I'm modern—I suppose I mean ultra-modern."

He looked at the fire, his fragile dude's phiz suggesting that he was vacantly revolving problems of the Dundreary order, things that no fellow could find out. If Helen Hope's clear-cut, square-featured face showed lineaments worthy of a Hypatia, Arthur Kling needed only a cap and motley to make him a typical fool: in all outward semblances at least. "You know, I confess to a—I suppose it might be called a weakness—in favor of conventional marriages," he hazarded.

Clotilde demanded: "Why?"

"Well, as I've—tried to ratiocinate about it," hesitated Arthur, his mild blue vacuous round eyes roaming toward the ceiling, "it seems to me that, just at present, being a member of a free union was about all one person could handle: I mean it was about a job in itself, under present conditions; and I both didn't fancy that I was fitted for

the job—of being a professional radical, you know—and, also, I wanted to give my time to something else—I mean, my painting, you know. I really didn't think I could do both—I'd seen persons, both men and women, with a good deal more of—of guts in them than I have—try to do both—and make a miserable failure at one or the other.

"I know I express myself poorly," apologized Arthur, "but the gist of the matter was, I turned renegade to radicalism in order to do something I was more interested in. I put all my eggs in one basket. If I fail, I suppose I'll be all the sorrier I didn't keep up my radicalism—I'll have nothing to fall back on, you know. Considering all these features of the case, you'll see why I can't claim to be a modern man, Clotilde—why Edna and I got respectably married, even though it cost us more money than we could spare to get Edna's divorce. I couldn't see any other way out."

"I fancy," said Clotilde, slightly nettled, "that Edna had something to say about the terms of your marriage."

"Oh, of course—" Arthur was beginning, with pained surprise, but his wife interrupted.

"I did *not*, my dear—not a word!" retorted Edna, with some crispness. "I find, furthermore, that I have nothing to say about most matters that intimately concern our joint fortunes.—Just look at him!" she continued, turning to survey her flustered husband as if he had suddenly become a curiosity, entirely unrelated to her. "He looks like a feather-brain—like putty—like dough, doesn't he? A zephyr would blow his poor idiotic wits in any direction, wouldn't it? Yes, it would *not*!"

Underneath that guileless appearance of near-lunacy, Clotilde, he's flint, he's granite, he's reinforced concrete! Just at present, he's making up his mind to go to the war—to enter the regular army, and he'll probably do it, in spite of all I can do or say!"

"Now, *dearie*—" Arthur was flustered to the point of horrified indignation.

"Look at him—he's a wonder!" continued his wife, with curiously detached interest. "At this very identical moment he's resolving to do his best to become a casualty—I've watched him as he warmed to the idea, through the past six months, and this evening has put the finishing touches on his determination."

"Edna—*please* talk sense!" protested her husband. "You know, I merely said that I'd never had any idea that war was so horrible—until we found Helen—as we found her, you know—"

"Isn't that a *wonderful* deciding argument, Clotilde?" Edna was as much edified as if she had produced a rare variety of evening gown. "War is really—well, quite horrible, you know—blood, bullet-wounds, dead women as well as dead men—oceans of nice fresh corpses, and others not so fresh—"

"Edna! You're getting hysterical, precious! *Please* listen to hubby—"

"And no one to sit around, as we are sitting, to keep the rats and other vermin away!—No, Artie, I will *not* keep still—at least freedom of speech remains to me! Nor am I one whit hysterical—I'm dealing in plain matters of common knowledge and common sense!"

"All this," explained Artie, miserably, disgustedly, "because I ventured the simple remark that this—this

accident—seemed to bring the war to Woodbridge, to suggest the greater, the infinitely greater horrors—”

“ He’s only been waiting to become convinced that the horror was great enough,” explained Edna to Clotilde, ignoring Artie completely: “ his gentle nature couldn’t believe that things anywhere could be so bad—they must have been exaggerated. I’ve watched him with the greatest interest. The newspapers started him—I tried to keep them from him, but he’d become accustomed to read them right after breakfast, both the *Times* and the *Tribune*; otherwise, he couldn’t work. Well, when things weren’t going well with the Allies, he couldn’t work, anyway; he’d mope around—God, it’s an awful thing to see Artie mope! He enters into it so whole-souledly, it takes every ounce of pep out of him; his voice is a groan, he rolls his poor foolish eyes like a dying calf, he won’t eat, he tries to hold a brush, gives it up, and goes and lies down on his couch and moans feebly at the ceiling. Oh, he’s enjoyed the war, Artie has! Thanks to the beastly war, we’re facing starvation, and Artie’s facing the wreck of his career—he can’t even draw a presentable Grape Nuts picture any more!”

Artie groaned: “ My dear, my dear—I *try*—I’ll even give up reading the *papers*—”

“ You see—he *tries*.” Edna nodded vigorously. “ He works like a mountain in labor. I’ve stood outside the door of his studio by the hour, and listened to him while he tried to work—such rumbling, grunting, groaning, toothy hissings of despair, mutterings about Boches and Huns—like a mountain trying to suppress an avalanche! But it’s worse when he carries his troubles into his sleep, when he makes night hideous—”

Artie was shocked into startled denial: "Edna! I don't do that!"

"Oh, don't you *just!* And his poor selfish wife crying into her pillow beside him—no wonder her nerves have all gone to pot—no wonder she has hysterics—"

Artie, tears flowing steadily from his two round eyes down his cheeks, dripping from the ends of his ridiculous little mustache, knelt at her knees, took her hands in both of his. "If you'd only—if hubby's little pet had only t-told him!" he blubbered.

"A—fine lot of good that would have done!" snapped Edna, throwing her arms around his neck, drawing his head to her breast, fiercely tender. "And through it all, Clo', if you'll believe me—" She looked at Clotilde, blinking fiery indignation through her tears: "he's never once mentioned his heart's desire, his burning yearning to get a gun, go over there, and commit general German murder! But he shall go—yes, he shall go-oh!" She broke completely for a moment, her head dropped over Artie's, sobs came from between her clenched teeth. "Uh-uck!" choked her husband; she was holding his head so tightly against her bosom that the resultant backward curve in his neck threatened to strangle him. "Yes, he shall go—and kill two dozen Huns—and bring their hides home to hang on the studio wall—if they don't get his poor gentle hide first! *Oh, may God damn the German brutes that started this war!*"

Artie, released after one spasmodic hug that nearly finished the dislocation of his neck, gasped and guggled, tried to protest: "Ug—sweetie—"

"Don't be foolish, Arthur," Edna reproved him. "See, Polly's herself again: and I'm sure we're ever-

lastingly disgracing ourselves in the eyes of Clotilde—who's a good Pacifist, and wouldn't appreciate German pig-sticking as we would."

"Oh—glug! Edna, dearest—" Artie was beginning again.

"Sit back up there in your chair, and behave yourself!" his wife chided him, shaking a forefinger under his nose as if he had been a pet poodle. "It's all settled. Tomorrow you go down to Kingston—or wherever it is fool artists enlist—and get going. Maybe you can keep up your painting in the camps—you certainly can't at home.

"Well—I'm glad to get that off my chest," said Edna. "I don't suppose I could ever have done it, if it hadn't been for Helen. There's something singularly clarifying to one's sense of proportion about a corpse. I hope, if Artie is slated to become one, he looks as well as Helen does—and has somebody to keep off the rats. It seems to me that every beastly paper I pick up has something in it about those corpse-devouring rodents. Why can't they poison them off, or something?"

"I think," said Edna brightly, "I'll try to start a movement for that—try to get to France as an official rat-poisoner. I couldn't pass the physical examination for a Red Cross nurse—Oh, yes, Artie, I tried that—two weeks ago, when I made that flying trip to New York to see about my *eyes*—you see, I've known for some time that you were bound to go—and I'd have spoken sooner if it hadn't been so beastly hard to face the prospect of sticking in Woodbridge alone—Woodbridge in winter is bad enough, anyway. I must read up, at once, on rats and rat-exterminating—get letters to prove I'm an expert

—by God, Artie, I may get to France before you do! I really think I've hit on something good." She smiled cheerfully at him. "For the love of Mike, man, give me a cigarette!" she ordered; and Artie solemnly gave her one from his case.

Clotilde, throughout this domestic readjustment, had stared silently, intently, at the fire. She ventured, now that matters seemed to have reached a new equilibrium, to add a few sticks of wood to the fire, taking them, with a thought for the still hand that had probably put them there, from the bizarrely painted orange and green wood-box, at one corner of the wide stone hearth. Edna said: "We were forgetting the fire, weren't we?" She seemed restless. "Clo', dear, the Kingston place you called up—they promised that the—the conveyance would be here before nine o'clock, didn't they?"

"They did—and it appears they were mistaken," said Clotilde, looking at her wrist-watch. "But, dear, frankly—" Anyone could have sensed Edna's new restlessness. "I can just as well stay here, alone, until it comes; in fact, I'd rather *like* to stay here alone—I really would, Edna."

Edna apologized: "But I wasn't thinking of that: I was just thinking that Arthur might stay here with you, while I ran along. I'm getting keener and keener on the subject of—*rats!* I always hated rats—I never imagined that they might do me a great favor! I was just thinking there might be a good deal about rats—in our old Encyclopædia—I don't suppose that Helen and Carey had an encyclopædia—" Edna arose and went over for a survey of the little bookcase that stood at the head of the couch where Helen lay. "No, there's nothing there,"

announced Edna; "and, if you'd really not mind if I left you alone with Artie, Clotilde—"

"I shouldn't mind a bit—you both might just as well go—the carriage for Helen will undoubtedly come before long—I'd really like to spend a little time alone here with her," insisted Clotilde warmly, rising.

Artie rose and brought Edna's coat from its peg in the hallway. "I'm all agog about rats!" Edna declared, getting into the coat. "They're the most perfectly fascinating things—rats are! Especially the European Trench Rat, or Rodens Corpsicus!" She began backing toward the door, taking no notice of Clotilde's grave face, taking no notice of Helen whatever. "By-by, then, dearie—Artie's to bring you up, of course, for the night!" she said, waving her hand, and hurried away. Clotilde had never seen her so light-hearted, so completely reconciled with life. In some way, Edna's light-heartedness seemed an affront to their silent hostess.

"I hope she *does*—put that over!" murmured Artie, vacuously picking at his little mustache. "I think—I think she really *might*, you know! And think what a blessing it would be to—to the fellows over there!"

Artie's gentle preoccupation jarred on Clotilde; both he and Edna had become so shallowly oblivious of that greater battlefield, one of whose most pitiful casualties was before them! Clotilde said: "Artie, I honestly wish you'd run along, too. You certainly have a lot of things to do tonight, if you're going to enlist tomorrow?"

"Why—yes—but—" hesitated Artie, torn between desire and politeness.

"Then I have no hesitation in telling you, in all sincerity and friendliness, that I'd like to have this last little

time—before the hearse or whatever they send gets here,—alone with Helen. You see, Artie—we were, in a measure, comrade soldiers—in the same fight."

"Uh—why—ah!" gulped Artie, considerably flabbergasted. "I—yes—I hadn't thought of *that*. Of course, if you really *wish*—"

"I do—*really*—Artie!"

"Well—then—" Still not more than half-convinced, he strolled out into the hall for his hat and overcoat.

"I suppose—really—" he hesitated, returning wide-eyed, penitently thoughtful to the doorway of the living-room: "I suppose I ought to apologize—both for Edna and myself—our getting side-tracked—as it were—over this war business. But I don't suppose, Clotilde, you can appreciate how much it means to both of us—this chance to do our bit—however small—"

"Oh, I *do* understand!" insisted Clotilde, standing near Helen, glancing at Helen: Artie, at least, should not affront their hostess by leaving without a farewell to her, a farewell that promised to be for ever; but Artie's vacuous eyes were already filling up with ideas, with ideas of his hard night's work elsewhere.

"Well, then—see you later!" he murmured, absent-mindedly, and hurried away, banging the outer door after him.

Clotilde turned to look down at Helen. "You helped them both to realize a cherished desire, dear," said Clotilde gently, "and neither of them remembered to bid you good-by. However, I don't suppose that that would have worried you if you'd been alive, and I suppose it shouldn't worry me, either."

She put another log on the fire, handling it thought-

fully because it had been handled previously by a martyr's hands, sat down again in the comfortable wicker chair, chintz-cushioned, roomy, Helen's favorite chair, sitting sidewise before the fire so that she faced the sofa where Helen reclined. "I think I ought to tell you now, dear," she said, "that I shan't let them have you, when they come to take you away in that hearse, to store you for the night in some wretched undertaking parlor. Tomorrow morning will be quite soon enough. Tonight we belong to each other—we'll just sit and think, sort of take stock in the long, deadly war in which you lost your life.

"And the first idea that occurs to me, dear," continued Clotilde, framing the words with her lips but no longer, as became their greater intimacy, feeling it necessary to speak aloud, "is that your death, the stir it will make, the bits of truth that will come out as it is talked over—it will all help, dear! Your death shows our Modernism isn't all a silly joke—you, and other soldiers of Freedom, women soldiers putting idealism before your own safety, and dying, or wrecking your lives, to spread the truth—your death, and the deaths of others like you, will give pause to silly newspaper editors, and playwrights, and novelists, who make cheap humor out of fine things that they are too gross to understand. By dying, dear, you show that these ideals have a root in life—are competent for good or ill in the world. They will not laugh and cheaply philosophize quite so much at the shows we make of ourselves when we try to do away with conventional falsities, when we try to face, and make others face, the plain, simple truth—that makes men free! Oh, my dear, I've been fighting for the truth myself, a

little, up here in Woodbridge—not for such a fundamental truth, perhaps, as the one for which you chose to make your battle—only for a little more honesty and openness in facing the facts of parenthood—and I suppose any outsider, almost any conventional outsider, would see only a silly girl's highly humorous display of her ignorance of life in the troubles I've stirred up. What do people care about honor, responsibility, truth, once they are shorn of the worn-out, dirty, familiar rags custom prescribes as their necessary wear?

"Dear girl," thought Clotilde, "when the forts of folly fall, yours will be one of the bodies they find against the wall!"

She looked at Helen a while in silence, stirred, quickened in brain and pulse, inspired to idealistic pictures and high visions by Helen dead as she could never have been inspired by Helen alive, no matter how successful Helen's sex-experiments had been. Death and failure, twin glories of the sensitive, youthful imagination, were wine in her veins. Death and failure in the nebulous cause to which, nebulously, she had pledged herself, were crystals in which appeared magical symbols and meanings of life. With their aid, she discovered the falsities behind some of the phantasmagoria, miscalled solid facts, fondly relied on by many far older and wiser than she.

How ignorant she was, how visionary, fantastic, how daringly ready to doubt the roundness of the earth—as her daring and visionary prototypes had been ready, once, to doubt the flatness of it, or the established fact that it was supported on the backs of four tortoises! She had much of the equipment of a successful explorer; not, it is true, of the scientific explorer whose discoveries are

mainly of benefit to science, but of the great practical and humanly beneficent type. So Columbus, loaded with ignorance, lies, magnificently mistaken about nearly everything, set sail for the fabulous splendor of Cathay, and stumbled on America, braving the solid danger of his time that his ships might tumble over the edge of the earth. To such crazy adventuring the world owed that edifying new mass of fact and fable comprised under the general head of "Feminism," and Clotilde, at that hour, was ripe for the position of pilot on some such crazy caraval as the leaky old *Niña*, *Pinta*, or *Santa María*; she was a born and made discoverer, and established facts mattered not at all when they opposed her abnormally active imagination.

Granting only the possibility of continents still undiscovered in the worlds of love, parenthood, human relationships, and she was a significant figure. There was every chance that she, and thousands of her sisters and brothers, in their wild careening about, in their trusting to compasses that sometimes refused to point north, in their search for a new Cathay-ful of gold and jewels and rich spices, in their burning up of old maps, throwing overboard of conventional harbor pilots, taking to the open, unexplored main in boats that only their enthusiasm kept water-tight for fifteen minutes, crying "Land! Land!" at every sight of seaweed, going crazy with joy over the discovery of a bit of carved stick or some other rude insignia that suggested they were on the trail of savages—how they hungered and thirsted after savages, quoted and pointed morals with them—with all the naïve enthusiasm of true-blooded adventurers!— There was, spite of wrecks and deaths and general heroic

misery, every chance that some of them would stumble on something, perhaps something of some importance, in regions admittedly not so perfectly explored and mapped as is this physical round bit of matter of inexplicable solidity, considering all we can surmise about its composition, on which we inexplicably cannon-ball through inexplicable space. Not until the last mystery is brought to book can we afford altogether to despise our adventurous lunatics, derange our cabined, well-regulated, mystery-forgetting little lives, outrage our comfortable little dogmas and moral maps, throw our black-coated harbor pilots overboard, as they will.

Clotilde was inspirited, fired with new enthusiasm for the adventure, as any proper soldier-adventurer should be, by the death of her comrade. There was no thought of turning back in her; this bitter defeat and painful, untimely death cried "Forward!" There was far greater chance that she would go, brazenly and unprepared, against the very danger that had killed Helen than that she would bethink herself of her own safety. Given a chance for a free-love affair at the moment, given a man offering half an opportunity, and she might have chalked up another failure, or suicide, or discovery—or, more probably in a prosaic world, a kind of sordid half-success—along free-love lines. Fortunately, or unfortunately, Clotilde could think of no man worthy to accompany her on the quest. Her ideals were high, her dreams limitless; it needed a good figure of a gentleman to measure up to her specifications for First Mate.

It was a quest on which a First Mate was essential, equally essential was it that he should be a man. Clotilde turned her chair so that she faced the fire, forgot Helen

except as a very present inspiration, and began to think of men, or, more specifically, of a man worthy to be her First Mate. Even a poor variety of man would do, at a pinch, for the need was great. She was rather tired of her adventure in the direction of discovering a father, proclaiming him before all the world; it had settled down to a place where cheap compromise seemed inevitable, and it hadn't been the supreme Feminist adventure, anyway.

Clotilde thought of Skeeter, beginning with her most recent acquaintances among matable men. He had stirred her a little—he and the sport of chance, working mysteriously through a blackberry briar and an afternoon on a hillside. It was necessary, of course, that the man stir her—at least a little. But, on the whole, even her enthusiasm couldn't find suitable material in Skeeter.

She thought, going back a step, of Carey Beemis; there would be something heroic, defiant if she chose Beemis—if she made a success of an adventure with him where another Captain had failed. Beemis, also, had stirred her a little, in spite of herself, almost as much as Skeeter had, she recognized, now. There were reasons for choosing Beemis, excellent Modernistic reasons; and there were none, at least none recognizable by a good Modernist, against choosing him. Nevertheless, she passed on, deciding to return to Beemis later if no better material offered.

There was Bobby Partindale, of Greenwich Village and the studio quarter near Carnegie Hall, a devout and enthusiastic applicant for her favors following the end of her affair with Clement Townes. Bobby had lovely, wavy hair, and delightful big brown eyes; he sang Italian songs to ukeleles made from cigar-boxes and other inter-

esting junk; he sold the instruments at good prices, too, and he sold MS. copies of songs that he composed himself, good lively songs, with the right riotous and rich G. V. flavor. His special form of devotion was ears. "You have wicked ears!" he was accustomed to tell ladies; he had told Clotilde that. Then it was his custom to explain fully just in what folds and shell-like convolutions and lobal pinknesses lay the wickedness of the ears he happened to be devoting himself to. So great was his skill and knowledge that many ladies felt not only wicked as to their ears, but wicked, quite audaciously wicked, throughout the length and breadth of their members, before he had finished. Clotilde, on occasion, had been made to feel so completely wicked by him that goodness knows what had prevented her from doing most unwicked and properly conventional Modernistic deeds; perhaps it was her discovery that he was using the ear-method on at least two other Modernistic damsels in the interims of applying it to her. She feared, thinking the matter over, that Bobby wouldn't do for a First Mate. It wasn't so much that he lacked steadiness as that he lacked the material out of which steadiness could be constructed by a proper Captain. Clotilde sensed the makings of steadiness in Carey Beemis, thanks partly, perhaps, to Helen's suicide; the look on his face, just the glimpse of it she had been granted as she delivered her message to that roaring roomful of celebrants, had revealed depths and steadiness she hadn't had reason for expecting to find. Thanks to his fatal adventuring, Carey might develop into a real man; and yet—

She passed back beyond Bobby Partindale to Clement Townes—John Clement Townes, or J. Clement Townes,

as he had variously styled himself. Just as a comrade, as a good, not too important friend, Clement had been the prize flower in her considerable garden of beaux. He had literary education, delicacy, a good commonness in taste, a devotion to the plain truth that his good taste, except when he was drunk, had kept from becoming offensive. If he was exotic, rather hectic in his enjoyment of life, that had been the result of his boredom. He was nearly always bored. He had excellent excuses for the state in too much money, too many sycophants, and nothing vivid to do. He was at once too small and too large for his environment, too large to go into any of the business that offered, too small to cut a niche for himself out of the unpromising material ready to his hand. In his rare fits of seriousness, deadly seriousness, Clotilde had pitied him, almost loved him for his Byronic disgust with life.

She remembered him as she had seen him last, tall, long-nosed, with contemptuous dark-blue flashing eyes, too much chin, a Cupid's bow of a mouth under his neat little black mustache, trim, neat, dandified, athletic, rather English in his swagger and drawl, drawling out, under the exhilaration of too much "red ink," the sonnet he had composed to her eyebrows, for the edification of a café-ful of hilariously amused Modernists. He had written the verses on the back of a wine-stained menu card, and he waved the card delicately before him as he recited.

The rather hectic verses had been a particular shock to Clotilde because he had never given her cause to consider him more than a simple "good fellow," almost "one of the girls." He wasn't altogether a man; sub-

consciously she expected the ancient masculine virtues, or at least some of them, in any man who made love to her, who even showed that he thought of her as a woman: a certain dignity, stability, purposefulness, a certain solidity of mental as well as of physical structure on which, at times, even a very modern woman might lean. Clement had none of this. He could knock a man down, he was an excellent boxer and prided himself on the steely sinews of his arms and shoulders, but he showed no sign of being able to support, to rest, a tired woman, sylph-like as Clotide though that woman might be. His energy was all dynamic, katabolic, the energy called typically masculine by a few modern biologists, but still at variance with the static, metabolic powers that prehistoric, ancient, mediæval and modern women have sought, by instinct, quite as determinedly as the more masculine forces, in their mates. Clotilde, and others thought of him as a little sissified, a little effeminate; in reality he was too thoroughly typical young male, without those feminine virtues that have graced masculinity throughout the ages, especially masculinity after it has recovered from the first shock of finding itself young, strong to conquer, vigorously male.

"If Clement were only more of a *man!*" sighed Clotide, weighing possibilities. If he had been, her completed supposition ran, she might have lured him away from his beastly European brawl to a nobler contest. She knew her own powers, the allurements common to all marriageable young women, certainly not slight as possessed and wielded by herself. A cablegram to Clement, in the midst of his new attack on Germans and his own boredom: something short but significant: per-

haps just, "Come. Clotilde."; would he not come, even if he had to desert to do it? She ventured to think that he might.

"But he isn't a real *man*," she decided, and turned her thoughts to other First Mate possibilities. They were a pretty poor lot, on the whole, especially poor they seemed after her considerable gruelling of Clement-in-the-spirit. Clement, in spite of his alleged lack of manliness, was really the most alluring possibility. There was something downright likable about him, and interesting, too, as if he offered more depths to be stirred up than most of the men she had known. If only he had been not quite so restless, and excitable, and bored, and melancholy, and hectic, and unstable—and sissified!

Perhaps, she thought, there might be some artist still lingering in Woodbridge, or some member of the general literary and artistic riffraff, who'd be suitable timber for her First Mate, and glad to ship as one. However, that was a mere speculation; there was nothing to be done about it for the present, and she was a little tired, anyway. She replenished the fire, noted that it was ten o'clock, wondered when the conveyance would come for Helen, reassured herself that Helen should not go before the next morning, and became interested in Helen once more rather than in the plans and resolves that Helen's death had aroused in her. Helen lay calmly, taking her rest, lying in such state as the means at hand and the loving sympathy of her friends afforded.

It was Clotilde's doing, that crimson pillow under Helen's marble-white face, the black and crimson Indian blanket drawn cozily up to Helen's throat. The old-fashioned dark-red chrysanthemums with golden centers,

standing in a vase of dark gleaming bronze on the little reading table near Helen's head, had been gathered by Helen, but placed there by Clotilde. She had even found time so to dress herself that she might be in harmony with the occasion; she wore an old-fashioned, high-waisted gown of dark gray silk, with folded plaits crossing the bosom, leaving a little Quaker-like V-shaped opening at the neck, and the plain dressing of her hair, drawn smoothly down over her wide brows from a part in the middle and caught up in a loose Psyche-knot behind, was of a Quaker-like simplicity. Her low shoes and silk stockings were of a color to match the gown. She wore no jewelry; she had even taken off the platinum circlet, set with a moss agate, her birthstone, that usually gleamed on the third finger of her left hand.

"Dear," said Clotilde, studying the quiet face, "why do you look a little worried, a little anxious—for something? All worry, all anxiety, are over, now, for you—aren't they? Or was it the waiting—for delaying death—that still—" Clotilde arose and walked over to the couch. She smoothed the tightly pressed eyelids with her fingers, gently, till the wrinkles disappeared, and the waiting look was gone. "There, dear," she said, returning to her chair; "that's better, isn't it? I think you were waiting for someone to do that. Now—*requiescat in pace*. *Requiescat*, Helen, dear, dead soldier—comrade—"

She put more wood on the fire, finding some bits of dry pine at the bottom of the box, and turned to look at her friend by the better light. Helen's white face was all serenity, now; no liniament held a hint of anything further desired, feared, expected.

A curious little feeling of loneliness, of having no further part in her friend's interests, saddened the watcher, moved her to comment: "Now all sad thoughts, and all glad thoughts are over—for you, dear. But we—we have to keep on living. In some ways, you are to be envied, dear—you don't have to think of tomorrow. What you shall drink, what eat, what wear—yes, even how you shall serve the Truth, for even that thought is sometimes a bore. You never compromised while you were alive—and you don't have to think of compromises now. The rest of us, probably, will have to compromise—the more as we grow older. Yes, in some ways it's better to die young, uncompromising, uncheapened by having to be satisfied with poor little half-loaves of your ideals."

Helen's supreme indifference,—Helen, lying so straightly in an icy calm, grander than sovereignty—dispirited her. "You don't really need me, dear—you're sublimely beyond needing anyone or anything," Clotilde told her, sadly; and looked around the little living-room, half-consciously in search of diversion. She had been very serious, and very tense, for a considerable time.

There were books, perhaps fifty of them, their varicolored backs gleaming in the firelight. "I wonder what meat nourished her soul?" Clotilde asked herself, allowing the third person to creep in.

She recognized, among the more interesting titles, Hecker's "Short History of Women's Rights," George's "Woman and Tomorrow," and Mary Austin's "Love and the Soul-Maker." There were at least a dozen other titles suggestive of Feminism; Clotilde noted them with

general approbation, but her eyes roved on. "Confidence. Henry James," she read, and shrugged her shoulders, suspecting that the said "Confidence" revolved around a suspected adultery. "Gray Youth," by Oliver Onions; she had read that dry, drab attack on most modern tendencies, so ravingly indignant at the author's cheap, shallow, short-sighted unfairness as to make even its fictional husks devourable to the last one. Victor Hugo's "Dernière Gerbe" in half-red morocco; Oscar Wilde's "Intentions," in the cheap but good English edition of Methuen; a volume of short poems by Browning; Forel's monumental "Sex," without which no deep-dyed Feminist's library was complete; a volume of Bacon's Essays; a French-English dictionary; a volume of English quotations that she thought was Bartlett's, but discovered, by peering close in the uncertain firelight, wasn't; a pamphlet on birth-control, another on the work of The New York Society for Improving the Condition of the Poor—none of them interested her very much. She handled a few of them with the deftness of a bookish person, only to slip them back again. They weren't worth lighting the lamp for.

She sat down before the fire again, turning her chair to face the blaze, a little bored, truth to tell, even by the presence of her silent hostess. She had known the time when such books would have thrilled her to the soul. Now she felt just a little lonesome, deserted. It was a very old feeling. It dated back to the very beginning of her remembered consciousness. She had always been lonely, always hoping for somebody or something that would, without being a part of her, in some way fill up

the need, the gap somewhere, that made her feel lonesome.

As a very small girl, she remembered, she had thought that her father might fill that gap—her supposed but always very busy father, the Reverend Percy Westbrook, A.M., D.D. Her mother, she knew from experience, could never quite fill it. Somehow the size and shape and general dimensions of the gap in her soul suggested a man. “A lover—an adoring cavalier!” had been the verdict of sixteen, discarded with some heat at twenty-one, after a dozen unsatisfying flirtations. “A life work!” decreed twenty-one, and she took up her neglected painting. “Aided and assisted by an enthusiasm,” said twenty-two, and she became a heated Feminist. “The thing you’ve always been missing most is a composite thing,” decreed a wise volume by a Boston physician, that came her way in her twenty-third year. “You need what every mortal needs—Love, Work, Play, and Worship.” “Aimer, Travailler, Espérer, Rêver,” advised the gentle Michelet, at about the same time, but she preferred the Boston physician’s formula as less given to unmodernistic sentiment.

Clotilde was voyaging again, taking a reckless little voyage by herself, in search of the Isles of Youthful Content. It mattered not that her route lay from a common harbor, to a common and popular port—if her guiding star was rightly chosen. The universal loneliness of youth, the feeling of a lack, of incompleteness, universal as any experience of youth may be, one of those inevitable moving forces of the years before self-discovery has proceeded very far—what though she knew that other young things suffered similarly? The glory and

the tragedy of youth being that feelings are hard to communicate except by direct experience, her trouble was essentially new and original with her. She had sailed on a very old trade-route, with a thousand sails on either hand; and the destination of most of them, whether for good or for ill, would be that everlasting new and splendid and most ancient harbor called Marital Love. The fact that Love came first on the maps of the two geographers, she had just remembered, did not remove the glamor from her search, nor would it remove the enchanting surprise when she arrived. She voyaged as one on unknown seas, setting all the sails of her unique and universal loneliness.

She was lonely, she felt a need of someone, something: perhaps, she thought, if Helen had lived, they might have struck up a friendship, a close, satisfying, gap-filling friendship, and the mysterious ache would have vanished. Only a little while before, she had been sure that the finding of her father, a real friendship with a real and loving father, was what she needed. She doubted, now, whether her father could fill that need; he had his hands rather full of Ethel, for one thing, and he had regrettable teeth, for another. Now she turned to Helen, to the Helen that might have been if Helen hadn't fallen in battle; and again doubts assailed her. Carey Beemis, or if not he, some other adorer, either of herself or Helen, would probably have interfered with any perfect sympathy and comradeship. Girls' friendships, however complete and satisfying, were always being invaded by predatory males. Even she—she remembered her recent experiences with Skeeter and Carey Beemis, to go no further back—even she had recognized that she might

not be above capture by some predatory male. She had almost reached the ripeness and wisdom of considering such a capture of herself as not without compensations; if, in addition, it could be made to vindicate a leading tenet of Feminism—

It came back, on a firmer basis this time, to her need for a Mate—her First Mate, in an adventure not only of Modernism, but of life.

“I—I need a mate—every woman does!” she told herself, thrilled and startled by this discovery of a matter about which she had been fully informed by authorities too numerous to mention, and yet which seemed new and startling because, before the soul-stirring of that night, she had never really felt the truth of it deeper than the ideational-centers of her cerebrum. Now it flooded through all her cortices, through her cerebellum, her medulla oblongata, to the aroused nerve-endings of her whole body. It seemed at once awe-inspiring and strange that a man could be more than an assistant in a voyage of discovery beyond the matrimonial Pillars of Hercules: that he might verily complete her, answer the lacks and vacancies of her whole being, body and soul. She was suddenly in the peculiarly inebriating and dangerous state of being in love with love, a state as new as that evening’s slow moon-birth, then just beginning over the hills to southeastward, as old and generally flat as the moon to more sophisticated mortals.

“‘Aimer, travailler, espérer, rêver,’” she repeated, after Michelet, and found no sentimentality in the “Aimer” at least; even the stolid Boston physician began his formula with “Love.”

She began to review available material again, with love

as well as idealistic adventure in mind. What a poor lot of men she knew, had known! and yet, she cynically suspected, her acquaintance among marriageable young males had been quite representative, better than most girls', perhaps—certainly better than girls in small towns, who knew no young men with ideas above the making of as many dirty dollars as fast as they could. Like most metropolitan Easterners, she had weird ideas of "small towns," located indefinitely somewhere in "The West."

But, even if the low ideals of "small towns" were vaguely far away, she had to admit an embarrassing lack of available candidates for mating with a young lady for some time ripe for mating, and at last shocked into a realization of the fact. She thought of Clement Townes: she had discarded him as not good timber for a proper adventurer, but how about him from the standpoint of love? To her surprise, she discovered that she had judged him almost exclusively from that standpoint in deciding on his qualifications for a First Mate on the good ship, at least as good as Christopher Columbus' *Niña*, that had to be baled out every few hours,—the good ship Free Union. She had discarded him because he was "sissified," meaning emotional, unreliable, not "manly." The objection had come from a love-motive, she realized, quite as much as from an adventuring one. It was rather distracting: things were much mixed up. And yet Clement was the most available candidate, granted that he was still, or had ever really been, a candidate—

It piqued her to think that his candidacy might have been little more than a joke—it had really gone no further

than that ridiculous sonnet, and an attempt to kiss her while he was apologizing for it afterward, on the way to her mother's apartment. Now that she was seriously considering a mate, the possibility that any possible candidate hadn't been serious was—piquing, to say the least. Especially piquing in the most available candidate—unless God would send a man instead. She rose and walked around the room, quite warm and heated all over, in spite of the dying fire. She really wanted a man, her emotions had been shocked and ripened, something in her had suddenly crystallized as a current of electricity will suddenly crystallize certain saturated solutions; she knew that she wanted a man, was more certain of it the longer she thought about it, and it was not in her make-up to brook unnecessary delay, once her mind had been made up. Let but a proper and available man show his face, and he would have a hard time making his escape—granting, for the sake of argument, that he would have wanted to.

An hour passed. She sat before the embers of the fire; she had lighted a silk-shaded oil-lamp, rather than build up the fire, to make light in the room; the room seemed rather warm, even with the fire going out. She still wanted a man: not feverishly, as before, but with a quiet, grim determination.

Steps sounded on the gravel path under the high studio north light, on the gravel path leading in from the village road, a few hundred yards eastward from the brook. "They've come for Helen," she told herself, calming the sudden startled beating of her heart. The steps went up onto the little front stoop; they seemed to be the property of only one biped. "Or Artie's probably coming back to get me," she hazarded. There was a

knock at the door. She went out into the hall, leaving the communicating door open so that the light streamed out and around her; she was glad that she had lighted the lamp.

The opening door revealed a tall, grizzly-bearded, Russian-looking man, with the quiet smile of a mediæval saint, the bristling hirsute adornment of a modern Hot-tentot. His unconventional clothes sagged around his lanky figure; he allowed his large brown hands to hang by the thumbs from the side pockets of his brown corduroy trousers. It was the hermit returning, with the other recent celebrants, from Cy Wetmore's ruined party.

"We thought, perhaps, we might be able to do something," he said; he nodded back toward the road to suggest that he was not venturing to appear alone. "The Major was appointed to come in, but he's not very presentable. We were at Wetmore's, you know, when you—appeared." Evidently he recognized her. "I want to tell you—I've been commissioned to tell you," he resumed easily, "that we're all—perfectly responsible. The punch—it was practically nothing but ice-water; if we seemed a bit noisy, it was due to—to our living up to what was expected of us, you know."

Clotilde knew him by reputation: everybody who knew anything about Woodbridge did. She looked at him intently, thinking of the situation that had developed inside. The hermit looked embarrassed, cast down his large hazel eyes, scraped the doorsill uneasily with one large, rough-shod foot. He was a very modest man. Still, he was a man. Everybody said that about him, and Clotilde had no difficulty in recognizing the truth of the report.

"If there was anything that we—could do?" he

suggested, uneasy beneath the general survey he was undergoing; and added, bashfully: "If you don't believe my story about the punch, I shall merely be undergoing the fate of many a better messenger bringing a true but incredible report. I can only assure you that we—all of us—"

"Oh, you mustn't think *that*—I believe you, of course!" said Clotilde. "I was merely—thinking." She thought a little while longer, eyeing him intently. "I—things have so turned out that I volunteered to wait alone—and the conveyance—from Kingston—seems to have been delayed—"

"Oh—you're not *alone*?" interrupted the hermit.

"Yes—I wanted to be—I don't mind." Then why, she asked herself, should she have told him? Should she tell him the plain, unadorned, simple truth—that she had decided that she wanted a man, wanted one very much both for Modernistic and other reasons—and that he looked like a pretty good one? The idea charmed her. She was as tense, inside, as an overdrawn bow-string, more irrational for keeping her inner tensions so firmly in hand.

"But you can't wait *alone*!" protested the hermit, deeply moved; "wait—I'll get one or two of the fellows—somebody can give the Major some conventional clothes—"

"No—please, no!" interrupted Clotilde, motioning him back to her. In her plain, dark gray gown, with her plainly pleached hair, she looked like a Quakeress, though perhaps a Quakeress from a light opera. Both her cheeks and eyes were gleaming as if with stage make-up. Nearby death, in a very common way, had

made her more tinglingly alive, more drunkenly alive, than she had ever been in her life before.

She had enough common sense left to realize, if not that she was in danger of making a somewhat ghastly display of herself, that the hermit would run like a rabbit if she revealed her designs on him. He was too old, anyway, she told herself; and she had so wound herself up, time and chance had so wound her up, that she needed to go slow. It was a denial of natural impulses not, perhaps, strictly Modernistic, but she braced herself to meet it.

"If you will just stop at the nearest telephone—I think it's at the Holmes house—" she said, "and telephone to Kingston about the—the conveyance ordered in the name of Arthur Kling, that will be all that will be necessary."

"Oh—ah—really—" gulped the hermit; he rather resembled Artie in his vacuousness before simple ideas. "That will be quite all," she said, and closed the door in his face.

In some dudgeon she walked back into the living-room; he had irritated her by being a man, but not the man. She had refused him, turned him away, in an eminently proper manner. Her cheeks burned, her heart pounded; she sat down, returning to thoughts of Clement. At least he did not have that awful timorousness, that vacuousness of eye and manner. He had a trig and decisive way about him, something of steel-springiness to match her own.

A tapping on a side window attracted her attention; it was the hermit, returned. "What—what place was it we're to telephone to?" he called hurriedly.

"The Empire Undertaking Parlors!" Clotilde called back, frowning at him. The hermit vanished, and was seen no more.

"Oh, my dear!" Clotilde apologized to Helen, walking the floor in a flood of nervousness, five minutes later; "it seems criminal, shameful, that all these petty little details of life should go on around you—these undignified, wretched—my own state of mind and body—so far removed from your icy reserve—. And yet, dear, life *must* go on! Death only shows us how little time we have to spend—how important it is for us to live while we're alive—to find out what we must do, and *do* it! Death—it's like a whip and spur to us, to all of us who have the strength and stamina to take it as the Eternal Life Force must have meant it to be taken! It's like wine, Helen, dear—you didn't see, did you, how it brought Artie and Edna to a decision that had been hanging fire for so long—how it brought them out of a state of indecision that was wrecking them—unfortunate as their decision may be in certain ways—

"And now, Helen—look at me!" continued Clotilde, holding out both her slender, delicately curved, gray-silken arms. "Is it strange or unnatural that, in the turmoil, in the questioning your tragedy has brought upon me—is it strange or unnatural that I should have discovered, or think I've discovered, the thing I need most—the subconscious need for which sent me up here hot-foot to shock an old farmer nearly out of his poor old wits—to stir up his wife—the cure for the aching voids in my life—that even Modernism, which, after all, is only a work, *travailler*, and not a love—cannot fill? Helen, Helen, I think I need a mate, dear! Am I a

poor, weak-nerved fool to get all excited over a simple discovery like that? Helen, I really think—I'll send—that cablegram!"

The decision rested, invigorated her as much as Artie's and Edna's respective decisions had rested and invigorated them. As they had, she forgot Helen completely in her aroused and lively concern with her own affairs. She argued with herself, now that she had decided, that the cablegram, sending a cablegram reading "Come. Clotilde." would be an eminently proper thing for a modern young lady to do. Of course a quite ancient and unmodern young lady had done something like that in a quaint little book called "*L'Abbé Constantin*"; it had been quite *au fait*, at various periods and under various disguises, for a young lady to offer herself to a young man who was hardly expecting her—there was something romantic and exciting about it—like going off to find and claim a recently discovered father—only more so.

She was in the vivacious age, when even the strings that moved her so-called search for truth were so many vivacities—amatatory, emotional, nearly all,—and the years when she should truly begin the wooing, or making of love to truth for truth's sake, were not yet come. She was in that age which, most of all, has delighted the novelists and novel-readers of every generation; she was audacious, perfectly charming, shameless, full of youth's divine fire, disgusting, tempestuously lovely, spiritual or earthy, lovable or regrettable, according to what facet of her many-sided attitude a given observer might be deceived into considering typical.

She flitted about the room, the death-chamber, almost happy and exhilarated enough to burst into song. She

hadn't been so happy since she discovered that she was an illegitimate child, the daughter of a discouraged back-woods farmer, instead of the child of that knight of the Gospel, *sans peur et sans reproche*, the Reverend Percy Westbrook, whose almost infinite mercy had shielded and damned her childhood. She would have denied the "shielded," for she was quite modern; the directions on the old maps didn't satisfy; she turned them upside down, altered "north" to "south," and set out to see what she would see. No proper pilot but would have been horrified by her venture in the direction of Clement Townes, or, if a few of them might have admitted points of resemblance to the charming frankness of the young American girl in "L'Abbé Constantin," they would have been reconciled to it on grounds far removed from Clotilde's.

"I'll kill a whole bushful of birds with one stone!" she told herself, and began to count the birds in that bush. There was, one, another free-love union coming so shortly after Helen's failure as to prove Modernists, New York Modernists, at least, undaunted; and, two, a man would be withdrawn from killing his kind—it would be especially fine if she could persuade him to face shooting as a deserter for Truth's sake. Three, she would get a man, whom she needed, just as a man. Four, a man whom it would be greatly to any woman's credit to mould into a steady First Mate. Five, a stop-gap for the many intimate needs and vacancies that were beginning to suggest themselves so plainly in her every-day life that she could no longer deceive herself as to what she really needed. If the last three numbers seemed to overlap, their importance in her emotions, if not in her mind,

warranted the distinctions. She no longer thought of Helen at all, even though Helen's life was, in a very real way, prolonged in her more vital life, in the more vital life of the Klings, in a hundred roused and stimulated lives throughout the village of Woodbridge.

Helen, following her conventional death, had set Artie Kling free to kill Huns, given Edna Kling an interest in rats that might help many a poor soldier to die easier, had goaded Clotilde Hooghtyling into active search for a mate, had removed Ethel Hooghtyling's danger of losing her Hen for a trip around the continent, and kept Cy Wetmore's rented cottage from being burned down. These, her post-mortem doings, were even then widening, like ripples from a stone thrown into a pool, throughout the village, the town, even into certain remote little corners of the United States.

Carey Beemis, thanks to her, was at that hour taking such an inventory of himself as he had never taken before; he was almost certain never to participate in the ruining of another girl's life as he had participated in the ruining of hers. Carey, from being something of a menace to society, might be converted into a real help to it—if his reformation stuck.

Equally near at hand, Angus Andrew MacDonald had conveyed the news to his wife, startling her out of her delight at seeing him, thanks to Helen, so soon and so sober. She stammered that Carey was a brute, and Angus an angel by comparison, kissing him so warmly, with such a light of excitement and seriousness on her face, that Angus forgot Helen completely in kissing his wife back. Widespread was that reaction throughout Woodbridge that night; marital love blazed up on many

a cool hearth, driving away thoughts of Helen, whose dead hands had stirred the embers.

The hermit, having a night-cap with the Major before blazing logs, said: "It is hardly surprising that Miss Westbrook should have been in that state. I am reminded of the orgies that took place among the early Christians during the crucifixions at Rome—under Vespasian, wasn't it? Any strong stimulant to the emotions, such as sudden, violent death—you remember that scene in What's-his-name's memoirs—the old Italian *roué*—where the fine party of ladies and gentlemen in some duchess's boudoir were watching the hangings on the square below?"

"I'll take your word for it," said the Major. "I'm too crazy to get among some good lively corpse-making in France to bother about your erotics. Ten to one you were a lot safer than you thought you were, anyway. Dammit, all this stir-up for one little shooting! Over there there are thousands of 'em—hundreds of thousands of 'em—each about a thousand times as important, to my way of thinking. Gad—let me at it!" The Major chewed his pipe-stem, a more fit-minded and ardent warrior, thanks to Helen, than he had been in many a day.

"Well, all right—all right—but if I'd been a few years younger—and a little more presentable," murmured the hermit, and dreamed of Clotilde's face, and wondered vaguely whether she was still missing him, and astutely opined that she would Bernard-Shaw some more eligible man before long.

Back in Helen Hope's little studio, Clotilde was confirming his prognosis. She had got as far as getting paper and pencil from the big mission writing desk,

chief sign of Carey's interest in the studio's furnishings.

"Clement Townes, Lafayette Escadrille, France," she wrote; and, down below, in huge, firm, black script: "Come. Clotilde." How would he take it? The zest of uncertainty, the possibilities if he obeyed, set her heart hammering, her cheeks burning. How appropriate to send such a message on Carey Beemis's stationery, to write it at Carey Beemis's desk!

Appropriate—and yet—Some softer sentiment, some unmodernistic, shrinking violet of a sentiment, made her object to Carey's desk, to Carey's notepaper, to Carey's pencil.

"Oh, I don't care—I *won't* write it on his stuff!" she objected, frankly giving way to an emotional delicacy, and feeling much improved for it. She tore up the message, and hunted the room over until she found a pencil that, at least, might have been Helen's. Paper was harder to find; she finally descended to a bit of the margin torn from a newspaper, that day's issue of the New York *Tribune*. She was reminded of Carey's mention of Clement's letters in the *Tribune*; it appeared that Carey took the *Tribune*, and so had seen them. Clotilde looked through the paper, in some little flurry of excitement, but Clement had nothing in it. She was disappointed, and inspired to wonder what sort of stuff he had been doing, yielding further to a purely emotional reaction in feeling a bit glad that it hadn't met Carey Beemis's approbation, at any rate, however much that feeling reflected on her, and Carey's, ideas about the brawl in Europe. Had Clement changed—or was his reported epistolary waving of the flag merely another of his boredom-inspired vagaries?

She was still wondering about this when the automobile conveyance, at last arrived from Kingston, drew up in front of the house. They'd had trouble with electrical connections, explained the youthful driver; at least, Clotilde suspected, after a sniff of his breath, alcoholic connections had been excellent. A five-dollar bill removed his pained surprise that the lady he'd come for was not going until the morning. Upon his pleased and invigorated state, Clotilde sprung her cablegram, two ten-dollar bills, and the assurance that she would call up in the morning to make sure that the cable had gone as directed.

After the message, the long black automobile, the devotional driver and his two devotional assistants had disappeared together, Clotilde returned to the remains of the fire. She put on two new sticks, but the room was quite warm and cozy even without more fires than burned in her bosom. She dreamed, speculated, and finally dozed. Helen's placidity was so deep that, in the golden twilight of the room, she seemed faintly striving to suppress her amusement at the ways of mortals.

At about four o'clock, responding to the general thrill of awakening that passes through most animate and inanimate nature at the first hint of day, Clotilde awoke, shivering, startled, from a vision of the war.

She calmed herself by calling to mind the tendency of all natural things to wake, a little startled, just at that hour. Perhaps that startled feeling, common to the false-awakening of rabbits, birds, and human beings, derived from the fact that the preying animals went abroad, at that hour, to find still sleeping prey. False-

dawn, the false-awakening of things, most of them to look abroad and go to sleep again after reassuring themselves that there was no danger—the time when the sheep bleat in the fold, a little forlornly, the soldier awakens to shiver and draw his coat a little closer around him, the time when preying beasts are abroad, and modern armies rouse themselves to attack—thanks to tensions of body and spirit, to her unusual sleeping place, Clotilde experienced it with all its reactions of subconscious fear, gathered its age-old terrors into a half-waking dream that centered about its infinitely greater modern horror—The War.

She had hardly realized that The War was; she had the feeble powers of mental projection common to half-developed, highly emotionalized intellects. With most of her fellow Modernists, Radicals, Rationalists—all necessarily founding on emotions rather than on well-mapped facts—she had lacked both the ability and the desire to react to a thing so distant and undesirable as The War. She might have admitted that murder, arson, rape, torture, starvation, infanticide, typhus, and the bubonic plague occurring within a few miles of her home were matters sufficient to demand her attention. Even if they had broken out collectively in a neighboring state, she might have admitted that she had an interest in them, in the men and conditions and beliefs responsible for them. But Belgium, France, Germany, Serbia, Armenia were too far away: “This Most Uninteresting War,” wrote Carey Beemis, and a large percentage of Americans, including herself, agreed with him. Wholesale death by strangulation, burned-out lungs, ripped-out bowels, drowning, slow starvation, and such recently con-

trolled epidemics as were once considered sufficiently ghastly to get into histories—these were uninteresting because some hours and miles away, uninteresting although the germs of all of them had been wafted, with the certainty of death and taxes, to America, even while, with the callousness if lacking the artistic appreciation, of modern Neros, they fiddled and adventured along their own little lines, smiling sadly when they met persons so dense as to be disturbed by the fact that, not a city, but a world, was burning: not a few miserable slaves and Jews, but the finest Christian and Pagan races of Europe, Asia, and America were being crucified. Oh, strange indifference! American Radicals, low and high, drowsed over common joys and cares. Only to some of them, to Clotilde Hooghtyling for one, by accident largely, by the accidental centering of a common old before-dawn fear, did some faint hint of the war's Satanic and stark magnificence come home. As a person, stuffing himself for experimental purposes on fire, fires, conflagrations, and seeing one polar picture in the midst of his stuffing, will almost inevitably dream of icebergs, so Clotilde dreamed of the war, relatively insignificant to the vanishing point though it was in her scheme of things.

Clement Townes was in the war; Helen Hope had died of a good clean relatively pleasant bullet-wound in the breast; these two slight incidents, coming like unrelated, mind-resting pictures in the midst of Clotilde's widespread interest in different matters, inspired her to a vision of war.

It was a conventional thing, the vision from which she awoke: merely a sea of corpses in the rain, men's mutilated bodies lying among puddles of water, over a

bit of ground pitted and desolate as the face of the moon. No cartoon artist could have drawn a more conventional, uninspiring bit of local color: the thing was common to cheapness. It was only the fact that she was alone, that she was nervous and tense, Clotilde told herself, that made her shudder over it a little, even after she had built up the fire and made herself a cup of tea. Resolutely she refused to think of it. It was so trite, commonplace, ordinary, cheaply customary: a bugaboo to frighten children. Nevertheless, even the comfortable warm tea, consumed delicately with several "Society Biscuits" on the side, did not altogether relieve a certain nightmarish tendency to shiver.

She was quite disgusted with herself; she decided that the night had been too much for her, that she needed diversion. Once more she turned to the bookcase. The "Popular Encyclopædia of Familiar Quotations," which she had noticed was not the familiar Bartlett collection, seemed to offer diversion in the least taxing form. She took it down, glanced it through casually without being impressed by its gems of thought, and looked up "Truth" in the index.

There was Bryant's familiar mistake to the effect that Error, wounded, writhes in pain, and dies among her worshipers. There, also, was Holmes' discovery that "Truth is invariable; but the Smithate of Truth must always differ from the Brownate of Truth." "Clever, but shallow," pronounced Clotilde wisely. Further along there was a paragraph from Sir Isaac Newton's "Memoirs":

"I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on

the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smooth pebble, or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of Truth lay all undiscovered before me."

"Goodness!" said Clotilde; "he was very modest considering his achievements, wasn't he?" She remembered having seen his name, always near the top, in fifty lists of the world's ten wisest men, featured by a magazine. Several little thrills, either caused by Newton's remarkable modesty or hang-overs from her wretched nightmare that had been too naturalistic and commonplace to deserve the name of a real nightmare, traversed her spine. She preferred to attribute them to Sir Isaac's startling modesty. He put it rather well, too—with a calmness, as if he were stating a belief plain and familiar, finding simple and honest words for a simple and honest confession. Clotilde began to warm, and to wonder, gradually to reach a little awe.

"That is more interesting than any war," she told herself, and looked for a long time at the fire before falling into another doze.

## CHAPTER XI

HENRY HOOHTYLING, WHILE CONTINUING TO VINDICATE HIS RIGHT TO BE CLASSED WITH THE ULTRA-MODERNISTS, GETS RID OF SOME PHILOSOPHY ON COWS VS. HEIFERS—AND ETHEL CAMOUFLAGES ANOTHER STRAY

THE next afternoon, at three o'clock, Mr. Henry Hooghtyling inaugurated that series of close communions with Clotilde which she, as his daughter, had felt and declared to be her right. He got going under a spanking breeze, thanks to the fact that Clotilde had been wakened from a sound sleep to greet him:

"I've brought you a pound of butter and a pie from Ethel; there are folks that says Ethel's butter is about the best they ever put into their mouths, but as for me I don't think it holds a candle to her pie. Not but what it ain't prime butter, neither."

"Sit down," Clotilde invited him, depositing the basket on the living-room table, near the open fire. She and Henry had the Klings' main room to themselves. Edna was madly reading up on rats, out in the coolish kitchen, and Artie was upstairs in his studio, painting for dear life; they had decided, on second consideration, that he ought to finish up a few things before volunteering; he might never come back, and he modestly suggested that, if he were killed in the trenches, his pictures might become valuable, at least valuable enough to warrant finishing what he had on hand for Edna's sake.

Henry continued, eyeing the basket: "If I was to make a suggestion, I wouldn't put that butter so near the fire—unless, of course, you like your butter soft. Myself, I like it purty solid, purty solid; even in summer Ethel keeps it in the cellar, so's it won't get mussy. We got a tol'ble fine cellar, though we been bothered a little with rats. Rats'll get in anywhere, it do beat all what a nose they got for vittals. Every fall, after butcherin', I go round pluggin' up all the holes, puttin' pizen round for 'em—what a nose them animals has got for fresh meat! I've knowed 'em to eat—"

"Oh, let's not talk about rats!" protested Clotilde faintly. She looked up from depositing the basket on the floor near the front window. She was bilious-looking, washed-out, and she hadn't taken time to do her hair neatly.

"Sure not! Excuse me—of course they ain't fit to talk about—and yet I always did say a person'd better not be too feist about what he talks about—a healthy person can talk about nearly anything—that is, if he's real hearty. 'Twas a hearty man that et the toad,' we say up our way; not that I'd hanker after such vittals, but just showin' what a hearty person can stand—the healthier a person is, the less he'll worry about such things. Maybe you ain't feelin' quite so peart this afternoon?"

Clotilde made an effort to seem pearter. "You're perfectly right, Mr. Hooghtlying; I am the last person to object to perfect frankness—".

"Sure, that's what I thought—'She's the soul of frankness, you don't want to misjudge her just because she ain't afraid to use words in their right meanin's,'

I says to Ethel. ‘Times has changed among the young folks,’ I said, ‘since you and I was young—and we never had much chances at an eddication, anyway.’ Why, only one day in school for Ethel—for all she’s so well-read—and me, I never went to school more’n a couple winters, and was raisin’ the devil so hard than I didn’t learn much. What a boy won’t do! Seems like they had the very devil in ’em! I tell you, I’ve learned a lot, just talkin’ to you—about bein’ frank, not trying to hide things, y’know. You been an eye-opener to me along them lines—I’d never a-believed it!”

He shook his head, blinking at her; Clotilde said nothing. She hoped he might run down, soon, and go away. Her yearning to get real well acquainted with him, to pursue Modernistic themes under his fatherly direction, had mostly evaporated.

But Henry was full of conversation, full and running over; seldom had such stimulation for oral activity come his way. He had thought of a thousand things based on remembered sentiments delivered by Clotilde, that he wanted to say, a thousand things had happened that he wanted to tell her about.

He forged ahead: “Honest, when Ethel hove in sight last night—well, maybe I looked calm, but I says to myself, ‘Now the beans is spilled—God help us all!’ Why, sir—I mean Miss—that’s exactly what I said, under my breath like—what breath I had left. I wouldn’t a-been s’prised if Ethel’d lit right into both of us—began to throw things—stones, sticks—begun to claw and scream. She forgets herself, Ethel does, once every so often—but she’s improvin’. I think it was all bein’ dressed up in her new bonnet and cloak kep’ her restrained last night—

I told her that, and she said she guessed I was right. Wonderful what clothes will do—make you feel like a diff'rent person, a'most. In her old kitchen apron, I've knowed Ethel to throw stove-lids—not but what I admit I give her some cause—yes, some cause. But look how she took it—just like you said!

"I was wrong, you was right," said Henry; "you said she'd oughter be glad to find out you was my daughter and, once she got her head goin', by tarnation she was! Yes—you was right! She said it seemed such a long way off, and I'd been so stiddy for so long she could forget it, if they was any wrong done between me and your ma—and, says she, considerin' what a fine-lookin' girl you are, and seein's your ma looked like you—I told her your ma looked a little like you, and so she did, girl, so she did!—'Well,' says Ethel, late last night, after we'd had a long talk, me takin' your part, 'well,' she says, 'Hen, I can't say's I blame you. Any other young man'd a-done the same thing if he'd a-got the chance—probably she tempted you,' says Ethel. I told her, for the sake of the honest truth, it was all my fault, but Ethel, she wouldn't believe me. 'Women's got more ways of temptin' a man than any man, even if he's wise as you, Hen—' She thinks I'm purty keen, Ethel does, I guess I got 'er fooled there, but I never let on. 'Well,' says Ethel, 'I guess it was her fault as much as yours—and I respect you for not blowin' round about it,' says Ethel.

"'I guess it's somethin',' says Ethel, 'for an old farmer couple like us to have a daughter's fine and slick as that.' You know, Ethel, she says, as a matter of plain truth and nothin' but the truth, she's kinda your step-

mother, y' know." Henry thoughtfully rubbed his chin; Clotilde thoughtfully rubbed her forehead. "I've thought about it, and maybe, you know, she's right. She showed me in the dictionary where it said 'Stepmother: a woman who is the wife of a child's father, but not its mother.' Looks to me like it was the truth; and Ethel said, since you had such strong feelin's for the truth, you might like to think of her as your stepmother. She said she wouldn't have no objections, if you wouldn't?"

Clotilde, answering his upward inflection, admitted: "Yes—it does seem that she's right—"

Henry proceeded: "I don't see no way o' gettin' 'round that, though I must say I can't agree with her sayin' she's really more your mother'n anybody else, seein's she regular married to your real father, while your other mother,—Ah—you know—wasn't—exactly—not exactly. I told Ethel marriage wasn't everything —she couldn't go claimin' to be your most important mother—just because of marriage vows. When you get right down to it, I says, marriage ain't near so important as some other things."

He was a little doubtful about this Radicalism; at least his waiting suggested a desire for a stamp of approval from a real Radical.

"You're perfectly right," Clotilde told him.

"I thought I was—and I'll bring her around," said Henry. "She was all for bringin' you right up and havin' you settle down with us—leastwise, till you got married, as the other children did. Ethel's—well, she's what you might call conventional-minded, you know, spite of how well she's took all this. She says that other woman—your real ma, you know—Ethel, she says she's

no fit person to have your bringin' up—and the law, she says, will back her up—she says she's read about it any number o' places, children took from parents that been a bit—free-like, you know.

"But I'll get her over that—don't you worry!" Henry continued hastily, answering Clotilde's air. "She likes to run things, Ethel does, and when I ask her if she ain't got all she can tend to with her married children, she says it ain't the same's when you got a daughter, right in your own house, unmarried. I guess, speakin' confidential-like, you better go slow 'bout comin' up to board—we decided, o' course, you could board with us—that is, you better go slow if you don't hanker a'ter a right smart lot o'—o' motherin'."

Clotilde managed to put in: "I'll have to stay with the Klings for the present; Arthur Kling's going away to the war, and Mrs. Kling really needs me to keep her company. I hope, however, that I'll see both you and Ethel—from time to time. I intended to get up this afternoon to see you—"

"That's all right," Henry resumed; "if it has anything to do with the war, we can get along without you—though personally, much as I'd like to see that German Kaiser get his head chopped off, I don't see what cause this country's got to go meddlin' into it. O' course they sunk a few of our ships—but what business did we have sendin' a lot o' stuff over to kill 'em, I say. I say, don't go mixin' in fights that's goin' on t'other side o' the village."

"Yes—that's what I think," agreed Clotilde; but even this stanch Modernistic interpretation of the European brawl did not greatly stir her. She was keeping Edna

out of the only comfortable room in the house, perhaps Henry's steady conversation was disturbing Edna's studies. "I'm rather tired this afternoon; we—there was an unfortunate death in the village last night," said Clotilde.

A new flood-gate was opened for Henry's volubility: "Ah-ho-oh?" He allowed his head to fall back, leaving his mouth open, in his customary gesture of polite surprise, customarily revealing his dark misfortunes in the way of teeth. Clotilde restrained an impulse to speak frankly, plainly to him on the subject of teeth; she hesitated to open up a new subject.

"Yes—referrin' to Miss Hope that shot herself—too bad," said Henry; it appeared that she had opened up a new subject, anyway. "We heard about it last evenin', neighbor goin' by told us, but he misrecalled the name, and Ethel wouldn't rest till I went down to the Brookses' and telephoned to find out. Ethel thought maybe it might be you, and she said, right way, she'd be downright sorry if it was. That was what begun to bring her round, I guess: she begun to think how it 'ud be if you'd gone and killed yourself. First thing I knew she was sayin' you was a fine girl, and she didn't have no objections to tellin' it round, like you said, that I was your father, then she sprung this stepmother stuff, and after that she couldn't a-thought more of you if you was her own daughter. You might be headstrong, she said, but what could folks expect, considerin' the person'd who brought you up—you know, she'll have it, right or wrong, that your ma was more to blame than I was—but that's the way with women, always thinkin' their husbands is about right.

"This mornin'," said Henry, "she woke up—first time I ain't had to wake her I don't know when—just to tell me she was glad of everything, and she thought the truth had ought to come out right away. She went down and told Sarah, that's our stepdaughter lives near us, right after breakfast, breakin' it easy so's Sarah wouldn't be shocked; but Sarah wasn't shocked, soon's she could believe it, she just kep' sayin': 'Well, *goo-oo-oood* night! Who'd ever thought it o' *paw*?' She's crazy to meet you, Sarah is—and so's Ethel, now she sees how good everybody's takin' it. After tellin' Sarah, she and Sarah both went down to the Brookses', and broke it to Mrs. Brooks, and old Mrs. Poindexter, that's Mrs. Brooks' mother, and not one of 'em was shocked, she said. You was right—'pears like the truth don't do no harm, not's much harm as most people'd expect. They're all crazy to meet you. When you didn't come to dinner, and when two o'clock came, and still you wasn't in sight, they was nothin' for it but I must go right down and fetch you up." Henry, by devious ways, had arrived at the basic purpose of his mission. "'Course I told 'em you might not be feelin' like goin' up, but they was nothin' to it but I had to go down and bring you back up if I could."

Clotilde said, faintly: "As I explained, I am rather tired—"

"I could get a rig for you—Ethel said, o' course, you'd prob'ly expect me to get a rig," interrupted Henry. "If it was only that you was tired, your room's all fixed for you—"

"But I have to stay here—for the present—"

"O' course, I told 'em prob'ly you wouldn't come, but

Ethel, she said you'd naturally rather feel more at home under your own father's roof—seein's how you walked all the way up just to get boardin' accommodations—and she, not knowin' how things stood, bein' kinda short with you—”

“ I'm awfully glad she's so—so softened toward me, but really—”

“ She said she actually wouldn't feel right without you come up right way, so she could apologize—she'd do anything to make you feel at home. She said she wanted you to feel that our house was your home, and she was your real mother—she did for a fact.”

“ I'm a lot obliged to her—for her way of taking it,” said Clotilde, “ but I'm afraid, Mr. Hooghtyling—”

Henry anticipated a refusal: “ Well, we won't talk about it no further—we'll talk about somethin' else. Naturally, it's a thing you'd want time to make up your mind about, though Ethel did think, seein's I told her what you said about gettin' acquainted and wantin' to board with us, Ethel did think maybe you'd just want to come right home. She's been workin' all mornin' gettin' things ready for you, and she's got me out fixin' up a stoolum where you could do your paintin' with a north light, like you said—”

“ Oh, I'm sorry I—”

“ No trouble 'tall, none 'tall!” insisted Henry. “ Glad to do it—like you said, I'm your father, and I got a responsibility to you. Though I don't agree with Ethel that, bein' your father, I got a right to order you to come right up, whether you want to or not—no, I don't 'gree with her! Nor do I 'gree with her she's got any rights over you just because she's your step-ma, neither. I

say, if you come, you got to do it of your own free will—'thout no orderin' round. You needn't be 'fraid, neither, Ethel's goin' to order you round too much, if that's what's worryin' you—Ethel don't go much further when I put my foot down—and it's lucky for both me and her she don't. She's impulsive, Ethel is—but she's always ready to listen to reason—'cept when she forgits herself—which ain't often, no, that ain't often. You don't want to let *that* worry you. And if any such ideas should be what's keepin' you from goin' up along with me—"

"No, no!" insisted Clotilde, a little wildly; a faint suppressed burble of laughter from the direction of the kitchen door startled her; the kitchen door, she noticed, was slightly ajar. "The simple fact is, Mr. Hooghty-ling, I'm too tired just now—"

Henry was but slightly put back by her unfilial tone, by her unfilial use of the "Mr. Hooghtyling." "Well, we won't talk about it," he repeated; "it's, nat'rally, a thing you'd need time to make up your mind about, not but what I thought, and Ethel 'greed with me, that you was a quick one to make up your mind, and we both talked it all over, and we thought, considerin' specially all you said to me that first afternoon, your mind was all made up. Of course 'twouldn't tire you much to ride up—and you could lay down right away, soon's you'd met Sarah, and Mrs. Brooks, and Mrs. Poindexter—and we could bring your supper right up to your room on a tray—we saved some o' the chicken that was to be had for dinner—Ethel, I guess she misunderstood you when you said just as we was partin' there in the road that you'd come up to dinner with a great deal of pleas-

ure, just as you and Ethel was shakin' hands, not that I ever had much hopes that Ethel'd do it when I told her to; but she's warmed to you since then, Ethel has, you'd be surprised—she says all you need's a little motherin' by her—she don't 'prove of your bringin' up, you know, though I tell her—”

“ And 'tain't as if you needed to worry 'bout the rig, either,” Henry continued, hurriedly transferring to a new point to forestall an attempted objection from Clotilde. “ I took the liberty o' hirin' a rig—just on the chance you might be comin' back with me, you know—though I thought you'd prob'lly not feel like comin'—Ethel prob'lly made a mistake invitin' all those women to meet you, and not warnin' you beforehand— Anyway, you needn't worry 'bout the rig, cause it's already hired, and I'll have to pay for it whether you come or not—and the little extra I'd have to pay to have it take us back up the hill wouldn't 'mount to nawthin'—nawthin' 'tall.”

“ Please, Mr. Hooghtyling—not this afternoon!”

“ Well—I don't blame you—and, as your father, I ain't givin' no orders. I only advise you to come—if you feel like it. I wouldn't mention it 'tall, no further, if I didn't know Ethel was goin' to be dis'pointed, mighty hard dis'pointed, if I don't bring you back with me. She's got her mind all made up to have you, to be a stepmother to you, and she had a hard time comin' to it, and when a person comes round to an idea kinda hard, they have a hard time comin' loose from it. But if you really feel you'd ought not to come till *tomorrow* she'll have to stand it, I guess.”

“ I really do—I really fear—”

"Well, if you was to make it in time for dinner to-morry—that's 'bout half-past 'leven—maybe 'twouldn't be such a dis'pointment."

Clotilde arose, stepped toward the door. "*Will* you forgive me if I—I tell you that I have a frightful headache, and must go back to bed—dear Mr. Hooghtyling?" she pleaded.

"Aw, now, that's too bad!" he soothed her, from the depths of his chair. "Ethel's a great hand for a headache, the remedies that woman's got! Maybe a little ride in the open air—it's a lot better not to go to bed with a headache less'n a person just can't keep their feet. Is your—" He made round eyes, looked serious and doubtful, whispered from a discreetly rounded mouth: "bowels open?"

"*Hoo-ooh!*" burst Edna's voice, in a hysterical shriek, from the crack of the kitchen door. Henry sat forward, staring and startled.

"You see—you see—" gasped Clotilde, almost hysterical herself: "We—both, Mrs. Kling and I—are quite unnerved by our recent—recent—Really, I think I must ask you to go, while I look after poor Edna! Mrs. Kling—we are greatly upset—especially Mrs. Kling—in no position to stand—"

"Sure—yes—she did sound—kinda bad," admitted Henry, rising with tremulous haste, craning his slender neck around in search of his hat. Clotilde found it for him, put it onto his head, and gently assisted him toward the door. "Say—if I was to make bold to make a suggestion—" he hazarded, holding back, creeping along; "maybe a little ride in the open air'd do your friend good, too—and Ethel'd be glad to see her—and she's great on

remedies—Ethel is—anything a person's got wrong with 'em—”

“No, thank you, not today!” insisted Clotilde, pulling him along by main force, marveling, even in her state of near-hysteria, at the skeleton-like thinness of the arm she held. “I must go to her—there—remember me kindly to—to Mrs. Hooghtyling—and all the other ladies!” She got him out on the front porch, prepared to shut the door, but he resisted so well, coming a step back into the doorway in spite of all her exerted strength, that she couldn't shut him out. “Then it's half-past eleven tomorrow—me comin' for you with a rig at 'bout 'leven, say?”

“Oh, let's not decide—”

He had taken a deep breath, he proceeded: “'Course I know prob'ly you can't come, but I was just thinkin' William, he's Sarah's husband, might get off for dinner, and in some ways it might be better'n if you come today —just the fam'ly—not but what Mrs. Brooks and Mrs. Poindexter—”

He was astonishingly wiry and determined, but Clotilde pushed him bodily from the doorsill. “All right,” she gasped, into the momentary vacuum caused by her exertion of physical strength. “All right—tomorrow at eleven! Now—good-by!” Thereupon, having been false to most of her idea of frank, plain dealing, especially as between men and women, she shut the door in his astonished, but gratified, distinctly gratified, face. If a conventional acceptance, an acceptance that she had no intention whatever of living up to, gratified him—was the only way of stopping his nerve-macerating flow

of language— She dropped into the chair he had left, and Edna rushed to her assistance.

“ My dear! ” gasped Edna, chafing her wrists, “ I give you up—you can’t stay here—you must fly to New York at once! ”

“ Nonsense! ” Clotilde was recovering rapidly. “ It was only that I’d just got to sleep—when his call—”

Edna apologized: “ I tried to side-track him—I thought I had—but he just talked on and on, revolving round the subject of waking you—not that he wanted to disturb you—until I was frantic! There was nothing to do but wake you, or throw him out, bouncer-fashion, as you did! Really, dear—not joking: if you want to leave for New York this evening, to escape the hectic excitement of our little Catskill retreat—”

“ Nonsense! ” repeated Clotilde. “ I’m going to keep house for you two war-crazy idiots until you go—we can darken the windows, if necessary—and refuse to answer the knocker.—As a matter of fact, you understand, I’m glad that the Hooghtylings have taken to me as they have; and when I get a little more time, I’m going to get acquainted with them.”

“ Oh, Clo’, you’re *not*—”

“ I am, *too!* Don’t you see it wasn’t his fault that he wasn’t welcome, just now, with everything in this house so upset? Henry is all right—so’s Ethel—so are the other ladies so anxious to meet me. After you and Artie are embarked on your hectic adventures, I’m going to learn something about life from them—real life—they can teach me a lot, dear—much more than killing rats and Germans can teach you and Artie! Your sense of proportion is all shot to hell, dear, along with your nerves.

Your beastly little excrescence of a war can't hold a candle to ordinary, universal, healthy, modern human nature! Take that, now, and go back to your rats!"

Edna picked up her book, and sighed. "I don't know whom you're quoting, dear, but that isn't such bad dope. Carl Larsen, the Swedish artist, was up to tea a few days ago, and he swore himself blue in the face that this generation would be famous in history because Cezanne lived in it—not on account of the war. Everybody to his taste."

"Cezanne—pshaw—I suppose Larsen's pro-German—most Swedes are—and I notice most pro-Germans are belittling the importance of the war these days. I agree with Henry—I'd like to see the Kaiser's head cut off—and that neurotic ape, the Crown Prince, drawn and quartered. That old man, Edna, my father, he has got a head—"

Edna chuckled: "He was handing your Modernism back pretty hot and lively, at any rate—stepmother—perfect frankness—marriages not so much—bowels—"

"Seriously, dear—he's a very good Modernist, on all counts," insisted Clotilde. "I could have carried off his question about my bowels perfectly if you hadn't screeched—it was sensible and Modern and altogether right for him to ask it! The Swedes, especially, the Swedish Modernists, I mean, are making a stand for more frankness in speech—but excuse me, I'm keeping you from your edifying rats, dear! Go right back to them—as for myself, I'm going to dress, and set about seeing that you two idiots are fed, anyway, until you leave this house!"

"It's kind of you, dear—but damn the rats!" Edna

called to Clotilde, already disappearing into the bath-room.

"What—losing your enthusiasm so soon?" called back Clotilde.

"Cat!" said Edna.

"No, you are—rats are your meat," returned Clotilde, and laughed as she closed the door.

Edna disgustedly shuffled her pages of notes; with most sudden converts, she was in danger of backsliding. She doubted whether it was right for Artie to try to be a soldier; he certainly had not been raised to be a soldier. She promised herself that, at least, he should finish up every unfinished canvas in the house, and he had dozens of them, before he turned his attention to the matter of slaughtering Germans.

Clotilde, in the meantime, was sending a few thoughts after her cablegram; she, also, was in a state suggestive of backsliding. She even doubted whether she had been truly Modern in sending it: Modernists relied on an anomalous mixture of pure truth and plain common sense rather than on the emotional forces which, calmer judgment convinced her, had inspired that message to Clement Townes. At least, she decided, nothing might come of it; Clement had probably contracted other emotional interests, or he might be dead, and in either case her message would be quite beside the mark. At the earliest, she couldn't expect a reply within two or three days—she could put the matter out of her mind for that long, anyway.

Already she seemed to be settling into a restful back-water of life, removed from the somewhat hectic Modernistic activities of the past three days. Her mind turned

naturally to casual, ordinary, homely interests. She even descended to the banality of noticing the shapeliness of her hips, of remembering her Grand-aunt Tabitha's comment, delivered to a much-ashamed, violently blushing sixteen-year-old Clotilde: "You'll make a good mother, honey." Clotilde caught herself blushing faintly at the memory—and yet there was certainly nothing in that to bring a blush to the face of a good Modernist. Rather Modernistic, in some ways, had been that moralistic, self-righteous, plain-spoken old grand-aunt, dead in her militant spinsterhood in her sixtieth year, a decade ago.

"I'll go down to the village and get things for supper—and drop a card to Henry, telling him I can't come for two or three days, anyway," she said, making mental memoranda, hurrying into the skirt and shirt-waist and sweater and substantial walking boots that seemed suited to the more every-day level of her thoughts and emotions. To Helen, ordered home by telegraph to the little Indiana town where her father was a henpecked lawyer, she sent the tribute of a passing sigh while she attended to the final rite of putting a bit of powder on her nose. She had hardly known Helen, to tell the truth; if they had been soldiers in the same war, as she had felt so firmly and exaltedly during at least half of the previous night, they had served in different regiments.

Life in Woodbridge, especially life at the Klings' bungalow, had settled down to a fairly conventional level, by that evening, and it maintained the same level on the next day, and the next, until the days stretched into weeks, and the weeks into a month. Artie painted furiously: that was the chief visible remaining reaction

from the Modernistic events that culminated in Helen Hope's death. He had never painted so hard, never with such an interest, in his years of devotion to canvas and brush. If he did not come back from France, he said, he wanted to leave something behind him—not only something that would give Edna a start toward earning her own living, but something that would make him a memory in the minds of art-lovers. He never signed a picture without a thankful feeling that some discerning person might say, noticing the name, "That's a Kling—Arthur Kling; he was killed in the war, you know; perhaps he was the most promising of the younger American artists."

Edna encouraged him, in the interims of reading about rats, attending conventional Woodbridge teas, assisting Clotilde in getting the conventional Woodbridge breakfasts, luncheons, and dinners. When Artie suggested that he might have done enough, that it was time he enlisted, Edna found other work demanding his ante-mortem attention. She sent off a completed canvas, from time to time, to the Fifth Avenue art dealer who sometimes admitted a Kling to his sales exhibition, and the results were satisfactory. Artie had never painted so well. Impending death nerved his arm, fired his imagination, made sure his stroke. When three of the pictures sold for \$500 each, all in the third week of Artie's new fever of production, Edna felt that he might be disturbed by knowing that they had so much money, and refrained from telling him. She began to dream dreams, dreams in which Artie figured as a classic, with classic prices for his hundreds of unsold canvases. There was more reason than ever for postponing the

risking of such talent against German death-machinery and trench rats. Edna developed the conscience and astuteness of a circus promoter.

"It's queer," she told Clotilde; "but, if it hadn't been for Helen's death, I'm afraid Artie would never have amounted to much. Now—three canvases sold last week, and two canvases and four pochades since Monday! And the price has gone up to unheard-of figures—and that Fifth Avenue Shylock is begging for more! I really think Artie deserves—protection."

"Considering him, as you do, merely as a paying investment," assented Clotilde, "I agree with you." Edna smiled wisely; it was well known how she considered Artie.

Clotilde, as the October colors came, flaming out on hillside and meadow, began to dabble a little herself, pochades for the most part, with just sufficient merit to rouse the ire of Pop Larkin, ex-instructor in the summer art school. After the first two weeks, she had given up any expectation of hearing from that hysteria-inspired cablegram to Clement Townes, and visits with Henry, warding off Henry's attempts to take her up to board at the Hooghtyling farm, helping Edna about the house, all such small matters, did not fill up her time. At times she thought of going back to New York, but her mother was visiting in California until the end of October, and she delayed her return. With regularity and placidity that was a growing surprise to Edna, Clotilde painted, ate, prepared meals, slept, chatted, read the magazines, in general went through the routine of a typical well-regulated Woodbridge country-liver.

" You're just laying up for a new sensation, dear, of course," Edna told her; Edna's belief in Clotilde as an inveterate sensationalist would not down. " The longer you act like a sweet little girl Sunday-school scholar, the worse you'll blow up, one of these days. I suppose you've about exhausted the possibilities of exploiting your ancestry along Modernistic lines, and I'm wondering what you'll take up next."

" I'm having the time of my life—just resting and trying to paint—I certainly shan't 'blow up,'" protested Clotilde. " I like to look at the sky, and the trees, and breathe the fresh air, and eat the good wholesome grub we've been having, and sleep ten hours a night, and listen to my father—he's instructing me in Modernism, even if he does sit around and take my mind off my painting. I'm having a really splendid vacation, Edna—and, unless, of course, you're getting tired of having me—"

" Never—and I'll need you the worst way when Artie goes." That "when" had become a joke.

" *When*," repeated Clotilde.

" Yes, my dear—*when*." Edna grinned impishly. " I must have caught some of your Modernism, dear; the war doesn't seem so hellishly important to me as it once did. I think I shall be able to keep Artie working indefinitely—I have reached the point of getting him to start new canvases. He's out walking, now, looking for a landscape *motif*. Thank God!"

" I don't suppose a landscape *motif* is likely to murder him, at any rate," said Clotilde; if there was a hint of superciliousness in the reply, it escaped Edna completely, wrapped up as she was in a cozy appearance of placidity, from which war's barbaric alarms had been excluded.

Her comfortable little Pacifism, for some reason, irritated Clotilde.

Edna's way of meeting danger, granted only a conviction of the righteousness of meeting it, would not have been her way, Clotilde told herself. The girl rather despised both Artie and Edna, at the bottom of her heart, for having risen to heights which they had not been able to maintain. Their noble enthusiasm, their high determination to do and dare for the sake of an ideal, had descended to painting more pictures, to make more money. In Edna's case, it had descended to a downright contempt for the war. Edna had a sprightly little air of having beaten the World War, of having foiled its designs on her beloved Artie. Truth to tell, Clotilde did not admire Edna as a Pacifist as much as she had admired Edna militant.

In her own mind, Clotilde was in a complex and irritated state of rebellion, not only against the war but against everything that had a relation to the war, even against those Woodbridgians related to it only by despising it—in which class Edna now frankly belonged. On the average of once a day, Clotilde was reminded of the war, always to her mental disturbance, sometimes to her flaming indignation. Woodbridge, in common with all the rest of the country, was making the war more its own affair every day, really beginning to be excited and bitter on the subject. Even in her seclusion, Clotilde could not escape the new war spirit.

It assaulted her in steadily multiplying service flags along the village streets when she went down for the mail, in the talk she was forced to overhear in the post-office, in the village stores, on the streets, everywhere.

There was no more social life to speak of, because the women were putting in their spare time in a room over the barber shop, making bandages for the Red Cross: if Clotilde didn't particularly miss the social life, she was bored by having to listen to continuous identical explanations for its absence. It was not only a bore but an irritation to have to meet the solicitations of persons representing the Red Cross, or desiring contributions in order to furnish comfort kits for "our home boys, soon to be at the front," for a hundred and one war charities. Most of the solicitors met attempted refusal with argument. Clotilde ended by contributing whenever asked as the easiest way out of unpleasantries.

Even Edna's weekly scrub-woman, Mrs. Michael Mooney, insisted on talking war—especially when she discovered that Clotilde inclined toward Pacifism. "Ah, yes—my nephew is going—I gave him two pullets' eggs for breakfast when he was over to see me the other day," said Mrs. Mooney. "I told 'im he'd better eat 'em while he could—they was probably the last pullets' eggs he'd ever eat."

"Oh, I hope he'll come back all right," said Clotilde.

Mrs. Mooney shook her head. "What chance is they? I say it's a shame, sendin' the poor boys over to get murdered—my son, he got run over by a automobile when he was ten years old—and I always couldn't see but what God had made a mistake—but now I see He was kind. Archie—that was my boy's name—he would have been draft age, now—and I'm glad he's dead! Better get killed by an ordinary automobile than all shot to pieces over there!"

Clotilde was amazed, protested faintly: "But he might not—"

"Yes, I thank God, now, he's dead!" said Mrs. Mooney. "All these years, come every Labor Day, the day when he was killed, I couldn't hardly stand it—but I see, now, it was all for the best!"

Mrs. Mooney, also, was possessed of inside and unshakable information to the effect that there was soon to be no salt in the country: it was bad enough not to be able to get enough sugar for preserving, but what would happen to poor people when there was no salt for the fall butchering? Clotilde gradually became disgusted with Mrs. Mooney's variety of Pacifism.

Especially irritating was an interview with a tall, angular, white-haired, intellectual-looking spinster who was soliciting for some war charity or other. "But it really isn't *our* war, you know—so why should I contribute?" objected Clotilde.

The spinster replied: "Well, it's *my* war, all right—and, if you'll look around you, I think you'll find it's Woodbridge's war, also. Perhaps you didn't know that over seventy young men from this neighborhood have already volunteered and been called? I don't know precisely to whom you refer when you say it isn't '*our*' war."

"At least it isn't *my* war," Clotilde countered.

"Then you don't believe in the democratic principle of majority rule in all matters that vitally affect the national unit?"

"That's the point. The majority of the American people don't want this war!"

"You are either very stupid, my dear, or very badly

informed!" The spinster lady's gray hair gave her something of an unfair advantage. "If you will look over our national history, you may discover, as I have, that the American nation has never shown such a solid front in favor of any war—not the War for Independence, the Rebellion, nor the Spanish-American War. If you consider Woodbridge at all typical of the nation at large, I suggest you make a canvass, as I have, of the war-feelings of the people. If sentiment was opposed six months ago, it is overwhelmingly the other way now. I happen to know—American history is my hobby, and I've kept track of public opinion hereabouts. I confess I started feeling much as you do. I expected riots when the draft went into effect—that was the test of popular opinion—you probably know something of the results of that test as applied to the Rebellion? I would like to know, as a matter of personal interest, on what definite authority you base your assumption that the American people don't want this war?"

The woman was very insulting, too insulting to argue with, especially in the absence of definite authority. Clotilde gave her a dollar as the politest way of dismissing her, if not of making her more humble. The woman was not very appreciative. "I think I know whose war this is," she announced, grimly adding the dollar to a considerable roll of bills. "I'm going to make a little talk on that subject down at the Lutheran Church, next Saturday evening. I hope that you will come. I believe I have some information that will certainly surprise you, and may do you good."

Clotilde might have accepted this invitation, partly because of its very asperity, but Edna wouldn't hear of

it. No whisper about war must come to Artie. Even if Clotilde went alone, Artie might learn where she had gone, argued Edna, and so be reminded of matters that it was best for him to forget. Artie, such was his new devotion to his art, hadn't even noticed that Edna had discontinued both newspapers. "As good Pacifists, dear," said Edna, "let us adopt the Chinese motto to see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil—considering the evil in the motto to be a euphemism for war."

Clotilde's state of mental complexity and irritation was not improved by the Chinese motto; it seemed, for one thing, to argue for suppression of the Truth, since evil may, at times, manifestly be true, and not improved by the adoption of an ostrich attitude. "I don't know that I admire your Chinese motto, Edna," she said. "I'm going to look into this war, sooner or later, just to be sure I'm right. I suppose I should have looked into it before, but I'm having such a good time just doing nothing—and, of course, I agree with you in wanting to do all I can to keep Artie out of it, dear."

Nevertheless, on that afternoon when Edna made her latest joke on the prospect of Artie's enlisting, Clotilde had not echoed her friend's fervent "Thank God!" She felt a little lazy disdain of Artie, kept in cotton wool for bodily safety, and of Edna for keeping him there. In some lazy, hazy, indefinable way, out of the spasmodic complexities and irritations stirred up by the war, Clotilde's war-views had suffered modification. Pacifism for safety's sake, at least, did not appeal to her. If Edna had taken up her "I don't suppose a landscape *motif* is likely to murder him, at any rate," she would have been

ready for quite a little tilt with Edna, a tilt that might have ended in the expression of some war views she didn't know she had. In the absence of any retort from Edna, she resigned herself to wondering lazily whether the war was worth while, casting a side-glance at Edna's cynically complacent profile from time to time. Not the Truth, but simple self-interest, was at the bottom of Edna's rabid Pacifism. It was a situation to irritate any true Pacifist, almost to make a true Pacifist begin to ask harsh questions of her Pacifism.

They had drawn their chairs out onto the bungalow's wide southwestward porch, and they basked in the sunshine. It was the twenty-second of October, Indian summer weather, a day when the old Manitou of the Catskills sat on the summit of Teyce Ten Eyck and puffed pale blue webs of smoke into the air.

Henry Hooghtyling sauntered up the path, some fifteen drowsy minutes later, bearing, as usual, gifts. Edna went into the house, leaving Clotilde with the old farmer. They talked, disjointedly, quietly, with a wealth of mutual satisfaction, for perhaps half an hour. Certain details, such as Henry's determination to have his teeth removed right after butcherin', when it wouldn't make so much difference if he was laid out for a week or two, such as their understanding that Clotilde was not to visit the Hooghtylings until, with Arthur Kling's departure, things should settle down more at the Klings', having been settled to their mutual satisfaction, they enjoyed their visits a great deal.

"Well, they's nawthin' like comin' right to the point," announced Henry frankly, after their half-hour's desultory talk; "and the point is, Clotilde, that your step-

mother, I'm havin' difficulty controllin' her, and that's a fact. I thought I'd ought to tell you."

Clotilde asked: "What's the trouble?" She gained much information and insight into human nature from Henry's frequent quotation of Ethel, even though other interests had kept her from any large acquaintance with Ethel direct.

"It's this way: your step-ma—well, your step-ma, girl,—she says it ain't right, *nor* Christian, but what you ought to come to your own home, and live there till you're married, right and proper—she says. She says if I don't put her argyment up to you, she'll come down herself and do it. So—I'm a-puttin' it up to you, not wishin' you and her to get into an argyment that might not do neither of you no good. As I figger it, you'm a peart, fine-blooded young heifer, and she'm a good, strong-minded old cow—and they's bound a'most to be a little hookin' when you get that combination. The better the animiles, the more likely they is to be disagreements."

"That's complimentary to both of us, I'm sure," said Clotilde, without irony; Henry had meant it as a compliment to them both, and, rightly considered, it was. "But my stepmother must take it into account that my real home is with my real mother—when I come up to stay with you a few days—if you still want me—it will be only visiting."

"Sure—that's what I've told her, but she'm strong-minded, Ethel is," Henry explained; "nor I wouldn't give a peck o' spiled potatoes for any critter that didn't have a mind of its own, neither. I've argyed with her, by the hour, I have. Marriage, I've told her, don't

'mount to nawthin'—it's the livin' together, the gettin' used to each other, that makes a man and wife. Likewise a mother and daughter. Your real mother—Lord, how I've tried to show her—she lives down in New York, but nawthin' will do Ethel but she's a good deal more right to run you than anybody else—except me. That's the gist of it—Ethel wants to run you—she says it ain't the same havin' a married daughter to boss round and havin' one right in the house, ain't.

"Yes—you want somebody to boss round," says I.

"And if I do?" says she. "A little trainin' wouldn't hurt her. She's a fine girl, but she's been brought up with too free a rein," says Ethel. "Not that you could a-expected different under the circumstances. I'll bet she don't even go to church," says Ethel."

"Do you go to church—regularly, Henry?" asked Clotilde.

He shook his head. "No, I let Ethel 'tend to that for both of us—not that I got anything 'gainst the church, nor 'gainst our Dominie, neither. I went for a while after he said that about Ella Collins, at her funeral you know, how she was a good woman, and had about as good a chance to get to Heaven as most, spite o' havin' three children 'thout bein' married. I thought that was downright good common sense, and I went to hear him o' Sundays for a while—but he didn't do so well a'ter-ward, or so it seemed to me. Too much Jonah-an'-the-w'ale stuff—I couldn't swaller it. Myself, I b'lieve a person had ought to be let to decide whether preachin's interestin' to him or not. I got nothin' 'gainst the Dominie for tryin' to put over all that stuff; all I say is, as for me, I simply ain't interested. I'd ruther white-

wash my henhouse, or somethin' like that, of a Sunday mornin', or just set quiet an' smoke and think 'bout things. It do beat all how our hens been layin' lately."

Clotilde, refreshed and quieted as usual by his monologues, suggested: "Maybe I ought to come up and talk it all over with Ethel? Of course I've been intending to—but things have been so unsettled—"

"I dunno—I dunno," Henry interrupted, considerably to her surprise. "I've thought, sometimes, 'tmight be a good idea, but other times I don't see any good could come out of it. You and Ethel don't look at things the same way, like you and I do—'lowin' for me not havin' no eddication—"

"I don't know anybody who looks at things more nearly as I do than you do yourself," put in Clotilde warmly, recognizing the strangeness of the confession as coming from a Modernist of the Modernists.

"Well—and I'm glad of it. But Ethel—she's read a lot, and you can learn a lot o' things that ain't so if you read enough. When I read a thing, I say to myself, if it sounds pretty good—'Well, how does it jibe up with what I've seen and hearn tell of?' I say to myself. Just one thing—I helped move away the old cemetery; they had to move to get room for the reservoir, y'know, and, a'ter that I didn't take much stock into the 'Postles' Creed, where it talks 'bout resurrection of the body, you know. Now Ethel, she'd put her fingers in her ears if I begun to tell 'bout what I seen in diggin' up some o' those corpses, been there fifty, maybe a hundred years, right down to those that hadn't been buried but a few months. We opened up most o' the caskets, y'know, to

identify the corpses inside. Ethel didn't even want me to help do it, but they was four dollars a day into it, and I learned a good deal. Neither do I see why a person shouldn't talk 'bout it, providin' he don't go jokin' 'bout it, like some of the men did. If a thing's good enough to happen, I says to myself, it's good enough to talk about, and God, if they is one, didn't give us eyes to see things and mouths to talk about 'em—no, nor He didn't let them happen, neither, if He was afraid to have us talkin' 'bout 'em. 'Course I may be *wrong*—"

"I think you're precisely right," said Clotilde.

"Well, even 'lowin' we're both wrong," said Henry, "and they's a chance we be, too—even 'lowin' that, what I'm gettin' at is you and Ethel don't look at things the same way, not even enough the same way so's you could talk five minutes 'thout disagreein'; nor you ain't old, as I be, and so used to Ethel's ways and able kinda to get around her, like a man that's got any sense will get aroun' a peart old cow 'thout startin' ructions. Now, I delivered Ethel's message, like I promised her I'd do, tellin' you to come right up to the house; and, lookin' at it from my way, I'd say 'bout the best thing for you to do would be to send back word that you was kep' here and that your plans was very indefinite. If I was you, I'd give Ethel 'bout a month more o' coolin' off afore you come visitin'. 'Course I'm only suggestin'—"

"I agree with you—please tell her just that," said Clotilde.

Henry nodded, highly pleased by this sign of filial trust. "Just one thing more," he said; "ef you was to see her walkin' up that path to the house, 'bout half an hour from now—I ain't sayin' you will, but they's possi-

bilities, seein's she said she'd come down herself if I didn't bring you back in 'bout an hour, and I been here half an hour, I guess—time goes awful fast when I get talkin' to you, and that's a fact— Well, if I was you, I'd have Mrs. Kling go to the door. Not but what I'm fond o' Ethel, not but what she ain't a fine woman, you understand—but she's considerable excited by a book she's been readin', 'Loved and Conquered,' where a fine young girl comes near goin' wrong because she ain't been brought up with a firm hand, only her husband actin' like a brute toward her saves her, Ethel says. I burned the fool book just before comin' down—maybe I was wrong—it didn't seem to quiet Ethel none, not so's you'd notice it.

" Well, I guess I'll just mosey back, now," said Henry, rising, patting down the loose front of his best suit, always worn when he called upon his daughter. " They's some fresh eggs in the basket, and a pie—Ethel's got awful fond of you, hearin' me tell about you, not but what that don't make her more keen to boss you round. Yes, I guess I was right advisin' you to just keep out of sight when you see her comin'. 'Course I'll prob'ly meet her, and maybe I can get her to go 'long back with me, but I ain't bankin' on it—no, I ain't bankin' on it. It's like Ethel was gettin' lately to the place where she was 'bout half-way forgettin' herself most o' the time. Well, so long, Clotilde. I can git the basket a'right when I happen down tomorry afternoon—if you won't mind me happenin' down—?"

He was holding out his hand; Clotilde rose and shook hands with him, holding his scrawny, wrinkled member while she assured him that she'd be glad to have him

happen down just whenever he felt like it. "It does me a lot of good to confab with you like this!" she finished; and, quite abruptly, bent forward and kissed him on the cheek.

He accepted it with the stolidity of a wooden Indian, that first kiss from the daughter who, particularly by giving him an outlet for conversation, had won a firm hold on his old affections.

"I'll sure have them old snags out, come the end o' butcherin'," he grumbled, to himself, rather than to her, and slouched hurriedly away.

Clotilde, smiling, with a purring feeling at her heart, went into the living-room to acquaint Edna with the impending visitation of Mrs. Ethel Hooghtyling, bound on capturing and domesticating a straying stepdaughter. Edna was not in the living-room. Clotilde glanced into the bedroom, almost ready to disturb a nap, such was the exhilarating nature of her news, coming pleasantly into the somewhat monotonous level of their joint ménage. Edna wasn't in the bedroom, either. "Oh, Rats—where are you, Rats?" called Clotilde, proceeding toward the kitchen. Mrs. Kling's researches, now lapsed into such a state that they were fit matter for a household sobriquet, had suggested the name as a ripost for Edna's frequent gibe of "Uneasy Virgin" directed at Clotilde's Modernism.

"Yes, dear," answered Edna's voice, subdued by a closed door, from the kitchen.

Clotilde burst into the kitchen. "Say, we are about to be confronted—" she was beginning, and stopped, somewhat confused by Edna's air. Edna, sitting in the blue kitchen chair, with her hands folded in what went

for the lap of her silken Chinese trousers, looked conventionally herself, perhaps a little more bored than usual, and yet—

"What's wrong—anything happened, peaches-and-cream?" Clotilde asked.

"Oh, nothing much—" Edna sighed faintly, sniffed faintly, looked boredly out of the nearest window. There might have been a desert, or a polar waste, outside the window, instead of the lemon-yellow maple sapling that burned there. "Nothing—except that Artie's gone—to be a soldier bold."

"Edna! You don't mean—?"

"Yes—just that. Gone off to be a soldier bold. Artie—a soldier bold! Isn't it enough to make an angel weep, Clo'?"

"But—Edna! You said—he'd gone out to—to look for a landscape *motif*—and—"

"Sit down. Don't get excited," advised Edna curtly. She jerked her thumb toward the kitchen table beside her. "Artie's good-by," she explained. Clotilde saw a letter, a many-paged, closely-written letter, sprawled loosely as if it had been tossed there in carelessness or disgust. "That missive—he left it in the bread-box—I found it when I went to get him a few sandwiches—you see, he's been gone—hunting for that *motif*—since early this morning, and I thought he'd probably be hungry when he got back. It was thoughtful of Artie to put it in the bread-box—he thought, of course, I wouldn't find it until I went to get dinner this evening—knowing that we eat rusks for lunch. So he wrapped his farewell letter in the waxed paper, next to a loaf of bread. In that way I'd be spared about ten hours of

worry—he'd be gone ten hours before I found out where he was headed for, you see."

Clotilde objected: "But—it doesn't seem like Artie—some way—"

"You say that because you don't really know Artie," said Edna, crossing one silk-trousered knee over the other. "It's precisely like him—if I hadn't been such a fool as to forget what he was like, I should have expected it. The idea that I'd thought he'd forgot his purpose—that I was making him forget it!—It's a splendid letter—you see, it's made me reconciled to my loss, left me calm and composed, just as he intended," she finished, sniffing thoughtfully.

Clotilde ventured: "Well, that is one good thing—"

"It is," agreed Edna. "As he wrote, if I found out, suddenly, this morning when he left, that he'd already enlisted—well, hysterics—bad for both of us, of course—

"Yes, he'd enlisted two weeks ago—didn't tell me he was going to try because he thought they might refuse him on physical grounds, or because of his eyes—he's frightfully near-sighted, you know. But it seems they took him, near-sighted eyes, flabby muscles, and all. They gave him two weeks to settle his affairs, and he preferred to use them in painting, and in allowing me to be happy in supposing I had him side-tracked, rather than in a continual emotional jag—such as we'd have enjoyed if he'd come back and sprung that news on me. Clo', he did *well*—he did it up in *style!* I'm proud of him—and I'm going back to my rats, a better woman because of the husband I've got—for, by God, he's *some* husband, Clo'! I wish I could let you read his letter—maybe I will let you read parts of it.

"I see you still look a little horrified, you dear Uneasy Virgin," Edna continued; "probably you're thinking of the good-by we missed. Well, we had a good one—don't let that worry you. He waked me up to talk about his work, and how happy we'd been together, and to make love to me, at six o'clock this morning; and, when he left me right after breakfast—well, Clo', it was a fine sort of a good-by for any woman to have to remember—I ought to have known then, but I thought he was merely inspired, emotional, on account of his painting, you know." She sniffed sharply, and blinked away a few tears. "Oh, I daresay I shall get weepy over him from time to time," she admitted, "but—whatever comes—I'll be so proud of him that I'll keep up! Yes, and proud of myself, too, because of something in me I didn't know I had, something that makes me take this hardest knock of my life in the way I'm taking it—something rather terrific—rather Biblical—that casteth out fear, Clo'! I'm glad he's gone—decently, without any mawkish display—if I knew he were going to be shot tomorrow at sunrise, I'd kiss him, and pat him on the back, and say —Go on, man—God is with you!" Eloquence sat strangely on the little woman; she had always been tart, clever, deserving of her reputation as Woodbridge's cleverest gossip, but this new upliftedness, bigness, of face and language left Clotilde gasping. "Of course you can't understand a bit of it—you can't begin to appreciate how proud I am of him—you practical, sensible, unemotional Pacifist, you can never be as proud of any human being as I am of my poor, foolish, distracted, divinely brave and noble husband! I pity you, Clo'—I'm so deeply and tremendously happy, that I quite pity you;

and I pity you the more because I can see that you're so benighted as to have the infernal nerve to pity *me!* Forgive me for boiling over like this, dear—but you simply can't appreciate—no woman can who hasn't seen her man go off to risk his life and hers for right and justice—liberty, the dignity of the human soul—no woman who hasn't been through that, and been made to understand the necessity and grandeur of it as Artie's letter has made me understand—you see, Clo', I've experienced something like a religious conversion, and it is just a trifle irritating to see you looking round-eyed, innocent, totally uncomprehending pity at me! For all your reading and erudition, Clo', you're about as virginal and generally ignorant of brains as you are of body—my poor dear!"

Clotilde's suspicion of a particularly cold and cruel form of hysteria, that had kept her biting her lips, ready to go to Edna's assistance if Edna suddenly collapsed, evaporated, steamed up like evaporating snow, into a misty mystery. And yet the girl was nearer comprehending the woman than the woman would have believed; that night alone with Helen Hope's body had given her some trace of exaltation a little resembling Edna's, had left memory-channels in her consciousness ready to receive a few tingling currents of Edna's emotional state. She had some nerve-knowledge, deeper than intellectual acceptance, of idealisms before which death might be no more than a cowed and humble servant.

Edna suddenly chuckled. "I suppose you think I'm as crazy as a loon, dear," she announced, misreading the mental state of Clotilde as fairly as Clotilde, only a

moment before, had misread her own. "Come on—let's go into the living-room. It's more comfortable."

Her gorgeous Chinese coat, taken off when she set about preparing some lunch for Arthur, adorned the back of a chair; she put it on, gathered up Arthur's letter from the kitchen table, and led the way into the living-room. "I suppose you had a good confab with your paw?" she mentioned, turning to grin over her shoulder at Clotilde; she would have it that Clotilde's paw was in danger of becoming a millstone around Clotilde's neck, Modernistic as that neck might claim to be.

Clotilde was somewhat affronted by Edna's lightness; to all intents and purposes she, Clotilde of much acquaintance with truth, was being put in the class of inexperienced younglings, to whom it is proper to remark: "Never mind, dearie, you'll understand all these matters when you get older." In the very nonchalance with which Edna set about rolling a cigarette there was the sign of a new and extensive barrier between them.

Edna rolled the cigarette awkwardly, spilling tobacco over her silk coat. She and Artie had taken to rolling their own cigarettes as a measure of war economy. Clotilde, in a slightly hurt, slightly indignant silence, watched her.

She was not so worn or nervous-looking as she had been; the month of comparative peace and quiet that the three of them had enjoyed had rested her nerves, ironed some of the wrinkles out of her small, keen face. Nevertheless, her shoulders showed a slight stoop, her arms an almost shapeless thinness, and her lined neck and loosely-piled grayish hair suggested her years of planning and scraping as a half-successful artist's wife. She was an

unpromising subject for a *grande amour*, such as, from time to time, Clotilde suspected her and Artie of enjoying. "How is everything," Edna interrupted herself to lick her cigarette paper, "up to the farm—including step-mama?"

Clotilde was reminded of step-mama's threatened raid, but she was in no proper mood to introduce the subject. Thanks to the barrier erected by Edna, she began to get a return of her ache of lonesomeness, to feel, in some way, out of things. Edna didn't need her; her mother, visiting in California, didn't need her; her father, while edifying, didn't fill the intimate vacancies in her soul. It was almost four weeks, a lunar month, since that lonesomeness of hers had forced her to unmaidenly reachings-out in the direction of a man—who hadn't responded even to the extent of a message. It was beginning to come upon her again, a rising tide of inward melancholy and longing.

"Oh, everything's all right up at the farm," she answered, and sat looking out of the window, the big sliding studio-lights that took up half of the south side of the room. Twilight was coming on, a softly blue and misty twilight, over the blended colors of tree, bush, and meadow between the Klings' bungalow and the road.

"Edna, you're bluffing," she announced suddenly; "you're full of Artie, of nothing but Artie—why shouldn't we talk about him? I'm rather full of him, too. He has a pretty good head on his shoulders—I don't think anything could stampede Artie; and, if he's found it necessary to get into that European brawl,—well, I may not be so incapable of understanding as you

may think me, you know. *Why* did he feel that he, of all men, had to go—if he told you?"

Edna, smiling a little superiorly, puffed her cigarette.

"Well, we act from our emotions, don't we?" she suggested. "I suppose it was emotional with Artie—just as it is with me. Emotionally, you're opposed to war; and emotionally, just now, I'm crazy about it. We can't argue the emotions. So I thought we might just as well talk about something else."

Clotilde looked out of the window. She almost wished that Mrs. Ethel Hooghtyling would heave in sight along the meadow-path; subconsciously, and a bit consciously, too, perhaps, she was suffering the fate of a fine healthy young egotist whose affairs were not of prime importance, who was even denied intellectual participation in the highly important matters of a friend. She had played second fiddle most of her life, and, common and instructing fate of the younger generation though this proceeding may be, she had developed sufficient personality of her own to dislike it.

"Oh, we can talk about emotions—there's nothing we can't intellectualize about, is there?" she protested; passionately she thought of a packed suitcase and a ticket to New York. Edna was a little too puffed-up, too much wrapped up in her own importance, because her husband had turned soldier. It was a fairly common experience, after all.

"Yes, but it wouldn't get us anywhere." Edna blew smoke through her nose and rubbed one blue-Chinese slippers foot over the other in vast content. "I could no more explain to you why Artie's gone to get himself killed—as he probably will be, poor flabby-muscled, short-

sighted dear that he is—than I could—than I could explain certain marital experiences to you, you know. You simply haven't the background—and that isn't a bad comparison, either. Pacifists and virgins have a good deal in common. There's only hope for them when you begin to find pacifism and virginity uninteresting."

"Edna—you're downright brutal!"

"There—I'm glad to hear you say it. Do you know, Clo', you've been staring at me ever since I told you the news about Artie as if I'd been a poor, nutty, pitiable, little widow. It gets my goat! I thought I'd stir you up till you got to considering me a sane and competent human being—not half as much to be pitied as you are. It's a good deal better to have a husband to send into this damned war than not to want to send one—believe me that have tried both methods!"

Clotilde shrugged her shoulders. Edna was rather unbearable.

"Edna," said Clotilde, with tinglings up and down her spine and more glow in her eyes than the bit of fire was responsible for, "frankly—you know—I mean, reverting to my hope—to your own words—perhaps I'm not going to be as much help to you, now that Artie's gone, as I'd expected."

Edna said, puffing smoke with some vim: "Why, Clo'—what's got into you, child?" She changed her mind and her mood: "Well, frankly, Clo',—and I believe in frankness at times, even if I'm not a Modernist—to tell the plain truth, I'm afraid you're not! I've got such a hate on all Pacifists, you know,—I couldn't help it, really, could I, considering that Artie's gone?—So coming down to the plain truth, Clo', I'm afraid we couldn't be good

cronies because, on so many vital points, we simply—couldn't understand each other." She chuckled suddenly: "So the war comes between lifelong friends! Please, now, dear, don't think I'm a perfect brute—possibly I'm weak to feel as I do—"

Clotilde said, calmly, in spite of the bitterness that was threatening to choke her: "Why, dearest girl, I'm only glad to know your—reactions—"

"Now, dear *child*, you're *not* hurt?"

"Why, how *could* you think it? I only wanted to know—to make sure—before suggesting—the evening train—"

"Please, dear—wait till *morning!* That evening train is so *slow*—it stops at nearly every *gatepost* between here and Hoboken."

"No, really, dear—if you're *sure* you won't mind staying *alone*—"

"But, dearest, that train—it's really *awful!*"

They were at daggers drawn, now; Clotilde sat clenching her fists in her lap while Edna burbled on, icily insisting on the unfortunateness of the evening train, conventionally pleading with her guest to remain until morning. By virtue of her greater self-control and matronly experience at similar encounters, Edna was having all the best of it. Clotilde, bleeding at every vein, had no chance to get in a thrust. Edna fell upon her with a hundred suggestions for her comfort, babying her outrageously, repaying her a thousandfold for Clotilde's half-defensive thrust of "dearest girl."

Edna interrupted her steady velvet-gloved hammering to look out of the window, over Clotilde's bowed and defenseless head, to look with bright surprise, and an-

nounce: "It seems we're going to have visitors, dear: now, I'm sure you'll stay—at least for *tonight!*"

Clotilde remembered Ethel, looked out of the window and saw Ethel advancing, so voluminous in her fuzzy black coat that her method of procedure might have been described as deployed, across the meadow.

"It's only Mrs. Hooghtyling," she said faintly. She was crushed. Even Ethel presented no further terrors. She would face her stepmother, bent on conquest and bossing, as a relief from the solicitations of Edna.

"Why, I thought I saw at least two persons," commented Edna, chatty, almost purring, rejoicing in her victory and cattish to a degree. "But it may have been only the size of your step-mamma that deceived me—that, and my conviction, from all you've said about her, that she must be a whole host in herself. Do you suppose she's coming to kidnap you, dear?"

Clotilde was slightly diverted; Edna had a way, a lightness, about her.

"I shouldn't wonder," admitted Clotilde.

Edna offered assistance: "Shall we meet her on the porch—barricade her out of the house—and oppose language to language? Or would you rather I did it, dear? I feel fine and conversational—I could guarantee not to let her get out above two complete sentences before I flooded her—sent her gasping and baffled away!"

"Yes—I really believe I'd back you to do it!"

"I can! Just sit there and listen—she may have volume, dear, but I have precision—and a good carrying voice!" Edna was whole-heartedly enthusiastic, but Clotilde, for some vaguely resentful reason that had to do with showing Edna her place, objected: "I think I'd

prefer to meet her myself, dear, if you have no objections. I *have* treated her rather shabbily—due to my preoccupations here, rather than to any wish to avoid her."

"Thank you—I had it coming—very good, dear!" Edna congratulated her; and added, with frank admiration: "You're pretty good, Clo'—we'll have a good laugh over our recent little racket after this cruel war is over, won't we, pet? You have to take into consideration that I'm not a bit rational now—I'm super-rational—and it makes me hard to get along with—just as all the old saints were, you know—imagine living with Joan of Arc—but I suppose I'll get less Joan of Arc-ish".

"Here's hoping!" Clotilde rose, put out her hand.

"You're a good sport, dear! I suppose I've been a cat. At the same time there are—emotional differences neither of us can get around!" They shook hands, Edna warmly, Clotilde with a little revengeful bitterness that her recent mauling more than justified, but some humorous appreciation, too; she said: "Yes, dear, I must go before we get our fingers into each other's hair, mustn't I?" At the instant footsteps, numerous and solid enough to belong to at least three persons, crossed the porch, approached the front door. "Come with me—let's meet this last danger together, anyway," requested Clotilde, slipping a hand into her friend's arm. "Sounds like a small army, doesn't it?" whispered Edna, pressing the hand against her side; and so, presenting a united front, they opened the door to Ethel.

Ethel's broad, massive, vigorous countenance, more rubicund because of the green bonnet topping it off, was wreathed in such smiles as cherubs, even, wear only on

extra-special occasions. Her blue eyes twinkled gaily, almost mischievously.

"How do you do? I'm awful glad to see you're in!" she chirruped, with no trace of baritone, in fact in the daintiest of sopranos, with almost a lilt on the "awful glad." She extended a yellow-gloved hand toward Clotilde, thought better of it, and extended it to Edna before Clotilde could reciprocate. "I suppose it's correct to shake hands with the lady o' the house, first," she said. Then she shook hands with Clotilde. "I been *awful* disappointed not to see you up our way," she chided Clotilde passingly, and broke up Clotilde's attempted apology by the general announcement:

"Of course it's ladies first, but now it's *his* turn."

With this cryptic preparation, which so pleased her that her eyes almost danced out onto her crumpled pink cheeks, she removed her wide, high, black-coated person, removed it slowly as if it had been a screen, to reveal a slight and smiling young man, whose presence she had pretty well camouflaged.

"Why—I *thought* I saw two persons—and, just now, on the porch—" began Edna, obviously at sea as to whether she ought to know the young man or not. She glanced at Clotilde for enlightenment; but Clotilde was remarking "Merciful Heavens!" in a perfectly flat and feeble voice, staring the while at the young man in a perfectly flat and feeble way. He was a remarkably conventional and ordinary-looking young man to cause such flat feebleness in anyone; you might have collected several thousand young men not essentially different from him on any Manhattan side-street.

"It's a surprise, isn't it? I found him down by the

stile," mentioned Ethel, quite on her toes with the social success of her discovery, "and brought him right up with me. He's from New York, just got in on the afternoon train. He wouldn't believe me, Miss, that I was your stepmother, but I guess I convinced him," she confided to Clotilde, and delicately suppressed a broad titter behind a broader yellow glove.

Clotilde was barricaded off, by Ethel, from any contact with the New Yorker; Edna, hopeless of an introduction, invited him in: "Come in, anyway—I suppose you're a friend of Clotilde's—even if poor Clo' seems to be—"

"And I do hope, ladies, you won't think this is an intrusion," declaimed Ethel, seizing the center of the room, of the stage, of general interest, of everything in sight, with her prerogatives of bearing and voice. She threw back the front of the big black coat, with a military gesture, revealing a green silk gown, bright green silk, with an escarp'd parapet of point lace near the rounded and voluminous top. The red jabot-tassel, Henry's latest tribute to her adornment, gleamed like a danger-signal against the green behind it, tossed about as her vigorous speech and vigorous local activity, even when she stood as stiff as a general on parade, moved it. "I hesitated for a long time." She began to draw off her yellow gloves, glancing from one member of her audience to another, holding them all by her glittering and masterful eye, her glittering and colorful bearing. "I says to myself, of course it was right for a person like myself livin' in a place to make the first call on a stranger, even if the stranger—" She glanced with proprietary indulgence at Clotilde; "—happened to be my own step-daughter. So, when she was busy, too busy elsewhere

to come to see me—" Here she politely challenged the staring and so far speechless Edna with the politest and iciest of glares. "I thought I might just drop in—to pass the time of day, if nothing else. I'd have done my duty—" Her roving survey of the field fixed upon the young man from New York, challenged his denial. "And, if no notice was took to it—" Here she faced about with a quick half-turn to catch Clotilde's eye, to keep it from meeting the New Yorker's, as it seemed bent on doing if it was granted half a chance. "Well, no notice was took of it—that's all. I would have done my duty—in callin' first—even on my own step-daughter."

She paused for the fraction of a second, sweeping the three points of the compass designated by the three members of her audience, waiting for a reply, for denial or equivocation. None was forthcoming. The New Yorker turned a mildly speculative blue eye at Edna, who stood nearest him, and ventured: "Taking it for granted that you are Mrs. Kling, I—"

Ethel immediately resumed command: "Well, I suppose we all might as well set down. When a person gets as old as I am, settin' appeals to 'em more'n it does to you three young things." She seated herself, bolt upright, in a central wicker chair, as if it had been a throne, crossed one patent-leather-tipped shoe over the other, waved her yellow gloves in her right hand in a scepter-like gesture. "Just set down—if I take the biggest chair it's no more'n my right, seein's as I'd make about two of any of you." They sat down, Clotilde at the right of the presence, Edna and the New Yorker at its left. The New Yorker glanced at Edna and thoughtfully smoothed

his neatly parted, short-cropped brown hair. He was as spruce and dapper and fashionably suited as a bank clerk, and he showed a bank-clerkish humbleness before manifest superiority. Edna met his eye, glanced at Clotilde; there was a helplessness about Edna. Clotilde was shaken by a sudden, unsuppressible chuckle: "You seem so silent, Edna, dear," she managed to shoot across before Ethel closed up the breach in her conversational offensive, and forged ahead: "It's nawthin' but the truth—I been expectin' to make this call for—honest, I'd hesitate to tell you how long," she declared. There was an emphatic quality about her commonest assertions that lifted them into the realm of the rare, attention-compelling, important. "I actually would! It must have been near a *month*—it must, for a *fact!*"

"Oh, really—I'm sure we're sorry you didn't make up your mind to come—" Edna began, starting a rearguard action.

But Ethel promptly overwhelmed her: "Yes, a body 'ud think I might—but a person hesitates about *some* things. I talked it over, time and time again, with Henry. Henry is my husband," she explained momentously, for the benefit of the two parties on the left who might not have been expected to know it. "But Henry—well, he believes in goin' slow—not but what he's not made o' nerve and nothin' else, once he's got his mind made up!"

"Why," said Ethel, tossing her head, compressing her lips as if at the beginning of an *ex cathedra* announcement, "there was his *teeth!* You know, he really ain't stro-ong—in fact he ain't been good for nawthin' for near onto fifteen years, ever since he broke down from

overwork in the quarries, that and lookin' after me and the children when we was all so frail and ailin'—workin' all day and all night, and walkin' six miles more'r less each way to the quarries, in below zero weather half the time, not gettin' 'nough to eat, me being so sickly I couldn't drag myself from my bed to look after him as he deserved. And they's never a man deserved lookin' a'ter more'n Henry, if I do say it myself, and he my husband! *Well!* All that might a-broke his poor old body, but did it break his nerve? No—he kep' his nerve, Hen did! Sometimes I think they ain't much more'n nerves to him—that, and a few bones 'thout enough skin over 'em to keep him from creakin'. They *do* creak, sometimes, maybe you wouldn't b'lieve it—they creak often o' nights. I've heard 'em. It's a *fact!*"

"I'm sure—" It was Edna's second attempt, stopped more abruptly than the first. "*Well!*" rumbled Ethel, turning quick blue eyes, sprightly attention in Edna's direction. She had the quickness combined with the solid stolidity of a pachyderm, and she was endowed with a plethora of oral powers that no pachyderm ever thought of possessing. "I was startin' to tell you about his teeth. Nat'rally, his teeth went, 'long with most of his other physical powers—they kep' a-goin', kep' a-goin' till he didn't have anything left a person could rightly call teeth. I kep' at him to have 'em out, and get a false set, but they was so much work to be did he said he couldn't spare the time bein' in bed for maybe a month, and he was right—they was more'n I could handle—not but what I told him I thought I'd make out to do his chores as well's mine and nurse him too. I got to thinkin' maybe he lacked the nerve to face it—actually I *did!* Not

*really*, you know, I know Hen too well for that—but anyway, one day, 'bout three weeks ago, I riled him so about his stummick bein' bad—'count of his old teeth, you know—what does he do but pack off to Kingston, right out of a clear sky, and have 'em out—the whole lot of 'em! I tell you, I was *scared*—

"Maybe you don't know what it *means*," declaimed Ethel, glancing from one to another of her listeners for signs of proper awe and not finding sufficient to suit her, "to have out eight great big back teeth, nothin' of 'em left for a dentist to get hold onto—cuttin', pryin' em out like old stumps! Why, Uncle Aleck, a good deal pearter man just to look at him than Hen ever thought o' bein' for fifteen years—though, afore he broke down, he was as peart as any of 'em—well, it laid out Uncle Aleck for a *month*, just havin' out four old snags did. But Hen—he made nawthin' of it—wouldn't even talk about it—wouldn't even let me put lemon and salt on his poor old gooms, all cut to pieces—lemon and salt stings some, but it helps the healin'. It was his nerve brought him through. He wouldn't even let me look at the place—just says, 'Never mind about the teeth, Ethel,' and went on about his business. Oh, he's got nerve, Hen has!" She faced the young New Yorker. "I'll bet you never went through nawthin' like that, young man!"

"No," confessed the New Yorker; "no—I admit I quail before a dentist—"

"And I don't blame you; so does most folks—but Hen, he's nothin' but a bunch o' nerve!"

"But, Mrs. Hooghtyling, are you sure—" Clotilde ventured.

"I'd *ruther* you'd call me '*Ethel*,'" interrupted Mrs.

Hooghtyling, with intense if gentle firmness. "Hen and me, we talked it all over. I thought maybe I'd ask you to call me 'mother,' or just 'ma,' like the other girls did, but Hen says it had better be 'Ethel,' since you've got to callin' him 'Henry' instead of 'paw,' and maybe he's right, seein's he mostly is. That was one thing I thought I'd ask you, Mrs. Kling—I thought I'd kinda put it up to you, as a married woman, whether it had ought to be 'Ethel' or, maybe, 'ma.' "

"I'm glad you put it up to me!" declared Edna, seizing an opportunity as pleasant as it was unexpected. "As a married woman, Mrs. Hooghtyling, I look at it, perhaps, from a saner and wiser standpoint than Clotilde might. I take into consideration the simple and accepted truth that you are, as a matter of fact, Clotilde's stepmother. I think that it should be 'ma.' I'm sure it should be 'ma.' It is customary, it would constitute a recognition of truth that, in the Modernistic state of society, would be especially valuable. I'm sure that Clotilde would agree with me that nothing but 'ma' would—would measure up to Modernistic standards."

Ethel was gratified, exhilarated, almost overwhelmed with pleased surprise. "Well, now, that's exactly how I argyed about it; but maybe Clotilde here—maybe she—" She was almost chirruping again, holding back most of her breath, trembling on the edge of this momentous decision. All eyes in the room fixed on Clotilde; the situation was tense, quivering, vital.

"I agree, perfectly," said Clotilde; she, also, was pardonably short of breath, but her words came full and strong. "I shall be glad to call you 'ma.' "

"Well—" It was not the familiar explosion, indica-

tive of the resumption of a conversational barrage. Ethel was weak with awe, with wonder, with justified sentiment. "Well—I—" Her voice quivered, she blinked rapidly straight before her; and, as when a strong man is brought to the verge of unaccustomed tears, her emotion filled the atmosphere almost to suffocation. The youthful New Yorker rolled his eyes toward the ceiling. Edna, also, looked at the ceiling. They might have been invoking the blessings of Heaven on that sacred moment, or praying for insight to understand it in its human fullness. Clotilde was the only comparatively calm person in the room; there was a suggestion of a faint glare in her eyes, of mixed triumph and outrage, as she glanced across at Edna, and her look did not soften when it encountered the rapt upward gaze of the dapper young man from New York.

"It does me a lot o' good to hear you say it, Clotilde," ventured Ethel, getting started again. "Henry and me talked it all over—" She proceeded to explain at length the devious methods by which she and Hen had reached their devious and complicated conclusions. Edna seized an opportunity to say to the young man: "Even if Fate, a particularly vigorous and conversational Fate, seems to have denied me an introduction, I think I know who you are. I hope you brought along one of those delightful ukeleles that you make out of cigar-boxes? You see, Clotilde's told me about their fame—and we're always short of music, except the canned phonograph things, up in this neck of the woods."

"Ukeleles? Really, I don't—" the young man was beginning, rather blank as to face and voice, when Ethel, with a sure sense for rebellion against her dominion,

sailed down upon them: "I was just saying to Clotilde, you know, that, although her real mother may be living, I want to feel I've got a place in makin' her comfortable, in doin' for her all those things a mother can do. She tells me her mother is in California, and I hope I may be excused if I felt like sayin' that a young girl like her might better have *some* mother around her, if girls is anything like what they was when I was young—"

Ethel paused, turned, acknowledged an interruption. Other footsteps were approaching the door, alien footsteps—and no power in the room had interrupted Mrs. Hooghtyling.

Edna rose, went to the door, opened it, all in an unusual silence. "Oh, hello—*so* glad to see you!" she called; "*unusually* glad! Come right in—we're having a nice quiet party!"

The Major appeared, eminently a Major in spite of his civilian clothes, full of an air of gruff, domineering, succinct importance, a fine compelling figure of a military man emeritus. "Clotilde," called Edna, escorting the Major's wife, to make way for whom Edna had pushed the Major into the room. "I think you haven't met Major and Mrs. Parkinson?"

Clotilde rose, crossed in front of Ethel, and shook hands with Mrs. Parkinson; she was a white-haired lady, delicately, quietly, old-fashioned aristocratic in every word and movement. The Major, having marched into the middle of the room, halted, dominated the scene, took account of the topography with a sweeping eye, and stared stonily at the fire. He seemed utterly unimpressed, not only by the dapper young gentleman from

New York, now risen and standing politely behind his chair, but by Ethel as well. Ethel nervously creased her yellow gloves; she was dominated by the Major.

"And this is Mrs. Hooghtyling," proceeded Edna, bringing Mrs. Parkinson forward: "Major and Mrs. Parkinson." Ethel was already on her feet, ignoring Mrs. Parkinson, full of interest in the stately old Major. "Oh, I've heard of you!" she told him, extending her hand. "You was a real soldier—"

"Umph—glad to meet you," interjected the Major, turning her hand and herself over to his wife, backing away. He glanced at the waiting young gentleman, glanced away, more unimpressed than on his first inspection.

"Hope we're not interruptin' party!" he grumped hoarsely to Edna; he was very shy, and he lost most of his voice when surrounded by strangers. "Saw Artie this mornin'—thought we'd just run up."

Edna's face turned calm and serious: "Then—he told you—he was going?"

"Yes. You know a'ready?"

The Major put a hand on her arm, blinked down at her, scowled frightfully into her tranquil, upturned, rather drawn little face. On the other side of the room, Clotilde was introducing Mrs. Parkinson to the dapper young man, but the Major and Edna were in a secluded space by themselves.

"Knew you'd take it—right," the Major told her, in a hoarse whisper. "It's hard—but—damn fine!"

Were there tears in his old eyes? Edna's eyes were full of them.

"Go now." The Major cleared his throat. "Run up

later. Have a talk. Don't let the wife get you to weepin'—nothin' to weep 'bout—what?"

"No, no!" declared Edna stoutly. The Major, with a final squeeze of her shoulder, made a strategic movement toward the door. He hated tea parties—especially tea parties predominantly hen. Clotilde got in his way. "But, Major Parkinson, before you go—"

"Gotta run—just brought the wife up—back this evenin'," snapped the Major, in three explosions, sidling around her with considerable agility.

But Clotilde held him with: "I want you to meet another soldier, Major,—a member of the Lafayette Escadrille—in France you know—"

The Major was not only held, but driven back in disorder. "Hey? What? Huh?" he gasped, reforming his scattered wits, clenching his golf cap in both hands, sending stabbing glances around the room in search of anything that looked like a soldier. One of the stabs struck Ethel full between the eyes, and she met it with soldierly determination; nevertheless, the Major's eyes left her, centered on the trim young New Yorker.

The trim young New Yorker was balancing his weight delicately on his hands and the back of the chair, lifting his toes a little from the floor. He grinned appreciatively at Ethel, grinned with more reserve at the Major, and leisurely moved the chair out of the way to be ready in case the Major showed signs of wanting to meet him, even of wanting to shake hands. His mouth, especially now that he was amused, slanted at a slight angle across his thin but tanned and vigorous-looking face. He had a thin, large, straight nose and very reserved dark blue eyes, reserved and a trifle bored, as the eyes of young

men accustomed to mingle in the strenuosities of the most strenuous city in the world are likely to be, the eyes of a young man who might have been suspected of having lost the ability to be much surprised by anything.

"Huh!" repeated the Major, so explosively, glaring so vimfully, that the young man raised his eyebrows at him. "A mere Corporal, Major," explained the young man sweetly, and straightened up, hands at his outside trouser-seams, so genially at attention that it was apparent he didn't care a damn whether the Major noticed him or not.

"Yes: just a—an airplane-soldier, Major," Clotilde put in, much distressed, made quite fluttersome by the suggestion of a riot. She hurried on, oilily: "Of course, if you are in a hurry—but I just thought—since Mr. Townes, also, was in the military profession—"

"Lafayette Squadron?" growled the Major at the erect and genially unconcerned Mr. Townes. Mr. Townes saluted. "Yes, Major."

The salute, the dignifiedly deferential voice, galvanic-shocked the old man into action. His heels clicked together, his forward-crane neck snapped back, his hands went down, palms flat, against his petrified legs; his cap, released, rolled onto the floor. Before it had stopped rolling, the Major's right hand rose like a piece of machinery to a perfect salute, rose to the gray temple of his stony-calm face that was anomalously electric with emotion.

"Eh—uh—beg pardon, Corporal," grunted the Major in a husky voice, grinning foolishly, unbending, becoming human almost as suddenly as he had petrified. He stepped forward, hump-shouldered, blinking with con-

trition and friendliness, to extend his hand. The young man from New York, and France, gave proof that he could not only be surprised, but quite visibly affected. “I—I—*thank* you—Major!” he stammered, and accepted the old man’s hand.

There was a strange atmosphere about them, an atmosphere that left the four women in the room helpless, astonished, veritably spellbound with amazement, and a kind of awe. So an outcrop of wild fetishism, or anything else at once tending toward the religious and the everlastingly peculiar, might have dazed them. Peculiar little thrills were traversing Clotilde’s spine, thrills of faint comprehension and wonder, some of which tinged astonishingly like high pride when she looked at the humble young air-soldier called Townes. He was so humble, now, that he was quite flustered.

“Uh—just over—uh?” asked the Major, solemnly pumping the Corporal’s arm up and down. His overwhelming pride and admiration, his more than fatherly tenderness for that young man who happened to be in the military profession, exuded from him, filled the room, filled everybody in the room: and almost over-filled, as it had some reason to do, the dumbly staring girl who had introduced them.

“Not just exactly—sir,” said the young man, beginning to blush. “I’ve been in Naples for the past few weeks—I crossed from there.”

“Uh—wounded—uh?” surmised the Major, pumping the arm more gently, so flooding the young man with solicitude that the young man became additionally flushed, stammered, beginning to be a little amused: “Well, not exactly—sir—at least only wounded in my finer

feelings—sir—I mean—a psychological revulsion—if you—”

Even the repetition of the necessary and proper “sir” could not soften the jolt which those hazy references to “finer feelings” and “psychological revulsion” seemed to impart to the Major. He ceased to pump the young man’s arm; he suddenly dropped the young man’s hand as if it had come over him that it wasn’t so much a hand as a desiccated fish. For a tumultuous moment doubt, indignation, almost rage, struggled with affection, with religious pride. The conflict was too much for him, the descent was too abrupt. He glared around, swaying as if made physically dizzy, for his cap, scooped it up, choked, “Gr-r-r-uf! See you later!” in a voice that made it more of a threat than a promise, and bolted.

He left a silent and a stricken community. The one male member of it was the first to recover wits. “I’m sorry he went off like that,” remarked the male member philosophically. “I could have explained—I hope I’ll see him again.”

“The Major is far more emotional than most people give him credit for being.” Mrs. Parkinson’s calm voice conveyed the information, and continued: “He’s been driven nearly frantic by reading Pacifist stuff in the papers,—he simply won’t *listen* to explanations of such matters.”

“Wasn’t he—wasn’t he *queer!*” mentioned Ethel, in a voice so like a very small girl’s that it would have been appreciated at nearly any other time.

Clotilde, without looking at the recent soldier who’d been wounded in his finer feelings, recrossed to her chair on the far side of Mrs. Hooghtyling, and sat down. She

was rather more desperately at sea than even the Major had been because she didn't know so well what she had expected, nor what she had wanted.

It seemed a long time since she had wished to stir in Clement Townes something like a "psychological revolution" against fighting. He had sickened of the beastly brawl, and resigned, or deserted—perhaps her cable had been the *causa causans*. She had been perplexedly playing with that surmise almost ever since her first sight of him at the door, wondering just how glad she was, and ought to be, if her surmise proved correct. She had forgotten that possibility while the Major showered Clement with love and honor: something had blazed up in her then, catching fire from the Major's fire, finding good fuel in the changes that Woodbridge's continuous war-suggestions had wrought in her soul. For a moment she had almost loved Corporal Townes, with something of the Major's communicated passion; and now—she felt some of the Major's desiccated fish reaction. She was far less interested, just then, in Corporal Townes than in wondering at her own feelings about him.

## CHAPTER XII

### MODERN LOVE: AT LEAST, ONE PHASE OF THE COMMON, OR CONVERSATIONAL, VARIETY OF IT

THEY were all gone, now, except Mrs. Parkinson, who was helping Edna to get dinner out in the kitchen; Clotilde could hear them chatting together in a war-engendered intimacy that made her isolation in the living-room suggestive of a neglected nook in the Great American Desert. Nursing saturnine thoughts in the gloaming, she meditated the wisdom of taking a car down to Kingston forthwith, there to board a train for New York. Clement was coming to call in the evening, as in duty bound, seeing that he had notoriously come up to see her, but she could leave a neat little note for Clement. It was her present feeling that Clement had bitterly disappointed her: he had done that, she realized, by living up to her most optimistic expectations of him, and she could have spewed her whole consciousness out, like an unpleasant morsel, as she admitted the truth about herself.

Without the conscious going home of one argument to her intelligence, her Pacifism had been badly battered. Weak, cheap soldier that she had been to allow rampant Woodbridge Militarism to pervert her intelligence, her feelings deeper than intelligence! A good solid dose of New York Modernism, beginning with the Brevoort at one o'clock the next morning, might cure her, she sur-

mised: and was shocked by recollecting that the Brevoort, even before she left, had been pre-empted by French officers and representatives, forcing most of the midnight Modernistic revellers into less desirable quarters. The old Brevoort, so long the haunt of midnight Modernists, given over to French war-makers—it was typical—perhaps terrible—

At any rate, Modernism, as represented by its two largest remaining activities, anti-war talk and free love, would be rampant down at the Black Cat: and yet the idea of a riotous midnight festa at the Black Cat rather nauseated her. Modernism had been changed by the war, changed and narrowed; as represented by its present adherents, it stood chiefly for a baffled, disgusted, loquacious Pacifism that was on the wane since it was so manifestly futile, and for an increasing eroticism, furthered by ever more numerous, and more *risqué*, balls, dances, "routs," and "revels." Successive announcements of these affairs, forwarded from New York, kept Clotilde acquainted with Modernism's progress.

It all reminded her of the Italian Renaissance: she had once hoped that Modernism might bring something of a Renaissance to America. She looked back to her early acquaintance with the Village, some five years before, remembering how, sometimes, parties had talked till dawn, about Beauty—whether America was revealing a new architecture in her skyscrapers—about utility, about Truth, and Goodness, all in the light of the latest discoveries in biology, anthropology, economics. Those intellectual talk-fests, even if they had been little more than scientific babble—as the night-long discussions of the Renaissance had been little more than metaphysical

babble—had fired brains, idealisms, while keeping senses cool. How the senses had crept in, how the whole intellectual structure had collapsed before the attack of outside brutalities that drew away the strongest intellectuals to fight for more fundamental truths and freedoms—had not Edith Sichel explained this for Greenwich Village as well as for Italy, in her handbook on “The Renaissance”? The Greenwich Village awakening had descended to something of the same state that produced the late-Renaissance orgies in Rome, and for much the same reasons. It had no more faith, no more vision: its ideals had changed from Utopian to Hedonistic.

Clotilde remembered recent happenings, more recent announcements and rumors. “The Pagan Rout” of the summer had been eclipsed by the daring of later revels. In the early fall “The September Morn Ball” had set a new mark, only to be surpassed by “The Falling Leaf Eve Revel”—announced by a drawing, on gold paper, of a post-impressionistic Eve both before and after the leaf had fallen. The “Bal Primitive,” “Paris and the Golden Apple,” and “A Night in a Harem” registered successive advances in Modernistic war-time achievement. Costumes for handsome young movie heroes of very scanty leopard and lion skins, for Modernistic damsels of little more than dancing pumps and a few bits of black court-plaster—despite her Modernistic refusal to be shocked by these activities, Clotilde recognized, for herself, an idiosyncrasy against them that made them unpalatable.

She suspected, and frankly admitted to herself, that she was spoiled for adventuring in the ranks of the Greenwich Village night-fighters, changed and personal

as the objects of their prime assaults had become. Even if their more 'Utopian ante-bellum activities had still maintained, she might have been spoiled: that gallant adventuring had met competition no less valiant than had served to turn the heads of some millions of well-founded European Socialists. Cheap and conventional waves of emotion had battered her little ship, torn the gallant ensign of olive-branch, torch, and dove-rampant from the prow, made her rather seasick, ready to put in at the first port, no matter how far from the fabled splendors of Cathay. That it was an unusually stormy year, that millions of other Cathay-bound pilots were in her state of mind, that other millions had already turned back—her knowledge of these catastrophes comforted her a little.

There was left the possibility of a little excursion toward the now-beginning-to-be-explored Isles of Free Union, in company with Mr. Townes, for example. However, most of her recent longing for adventure in those lines seemed to have evaporated, and it evaporated faster when she thought of Clement's wounded finer feelings.

She rather hoped the Major would disable Clement. Clement had refused an invitation to dinner on the ground that he wanted to see the Major. The Major, Mrs. Parkinson suspected, wouldn't come to dinner. "I'm afraid the Major didn't care for Mr. Townes—when he found out—" hesitated Mrs. Parkinson, after Ethel and Clement had departed together. "He—Mr. Townes, is a Pacifist, is he not?"

"I believe he is," Clotilde had admitted.

Mrs. Parkinson, with discreet politeness, had ended the matter with: "I thought he was one of that Greenwich

Village group—not that they aren't acting nobly according to their *lights*." This had not only settled Mr. Townes, but put Clotilde herself politely but firmly beyond the pale. Left like Hagar with a grown-up, unrelated Ishmael on her hands, Clotilde surmised that her enjoyment of Woodbridge, as long as her accepted war-opinions were Pacifistic, was very much at an end.

"Well, I think it was bully of him—simply bully—and, of course, the whole thing's likely to be over before he gets into the trenches," Clotilde heard Mrs. Parkinson saying to Edna, as the two of them came into the room, bearing matters for the dinner table: one corner of the Klings' big living-room did service as a dining-room at meal times.

"Oh, I don't know—and I think Artie'd feel disappointed, now, if he didn't get to kill at least one Hun," said Edna. Mrs. Parkinson lighted candles on the table. They took no more notice of Clotilde, moping in her corner, than if she had been on another planet.

"Well, if he has the courage to enlist, I think that's quite enough," protested Mrs. Parkinson gently. "And really, it's likely to be over pretty soon: the Germans certainly can't outlast the winter. You ought to hear the Major roaring about the present big drive, you know—wasn't it splendid?—Haig catching them napping, and getting almost to Cambrai, simply slaughtering them beautifully—the beasts!"

"I haven't been reading the papers—I'll begin tomorrow morning," said Edna; and Clotilde caught a hungry, triumphant gleam in her eyes. "Did he really kill a good many of them?"

"He did! You see, he sent the tanks forward to cut

the wire—the stupid Huns weren't expecting any attack before the preliminary bombardment, you know. Sir Julian Byng was the general directly in command—Oh, I'd like to kiss him! The British Tommies followed the tanks—ripe for killing—you know, the Germans have been such beastly *dirty* fighters throughout this war—inventing gas, and flame-throwers, and murdering defenseless women and babies—that the other armies enjoy killing them like pigs! And I guess, in the last few days, they've killed a good many thousands, too—thank God!"

"Yes—bully for the Tommies! But you said the Major was roaring about the drive?" suggested Edna. "You don't mean he doesn't like it?"

"Well, the Major doesn't love the British—I really think it's his Revolutionary ancestry," explained the Major's wife; "he's always howling because he says they'll have the Germans smashed before *we* can get at them, you see. He grumps around for days after every British gain. The Italian drive quite cheered him up—you know, when the Huns, by treachery and corruption got past the Italian frontier—after debauching the ignorant Italian soldiers, as they have the poor ignorant Russians—and as they have us, too, far more than most of us have any suspicion of!"

Edna had given up any pretense of setting the table; the two women stood close together, their ardent faces lit by the upward glow of the candles. "And the Major—he was cheered up by that Italian collapse?" asked Edna.

"Well, he pretended to be sore about it—of course," said Mrs. Parkinson; "but, in his heart, he was glad—the old sinner! Every German gain gives us a better chance

to be in at the death, you see,—that's how he looks at it! It's his one dream and hope in life to see an American army in Berlin—I hope he sees the day!"

Edna said, a little breathlessly: "Do you know, I think Artie—he must have been dreaming about that one night! He kept poking me in the ribs, and choking things like 'Die, swine!' and 'Berlin'—or 'Zoom Berlin,' it sounded like—he used to 'Zoom' a good deal at night—especially when he'd begin to prod at me. It was 'Zoom Rhine' and 'Zoom Berlin,' and 'Zoom' a lot of other places."

"Undoubtedly he was thinking of just that. He took the war hard, *excruciatingly* hard, didn't he?"

"Yes, he sure did!" Edna smiled faintly. "Poor Artie—if I hadn't let him go he'd probably have pined his life away!—Dear, he left me a letter—a wonderful letter: I think you're the only person in the world I'd want to read it."

"Thank you—I'd *love* to, dearest!"

"He doesn't expect to see an American army in Berlin, but he says it would be the greatest day in the history of the world if one could get there—the greatest for freedom, and justice, and honor, and—and—"

"Yes, dear—and so it would! The very greatest day in the history of the world! God send we live to see it!"

Edna's upliftedness of face changed to doubt: she sniffed the air: "The corn-bread!" she gasped, and scurried toward the kitchen.

Mrs. Parkinson laughed, turned to look around the room, caught sight of Clotilde. "Oh, Miss West—excuse me," she said; "but, you see, we got to thinking of you as Miss Westbrook—we were always coming up

to call, but even we Woodbridgers sometimes have busy spells. The Red Cross has been taking every *moment* of my spare time."

"Of course," admitted Clotilde faintly.

"I was merely going to remark, Miss Hootling," continued the Major's wife gently, "that I hoped you didn't mind our talking about the war. You see, it's *so* much on our minds—in fact, I've been so busy with Red Cross work that I haven't pretended to keep up my social duties. Otherwise, please believe me, we should have seen more of you. I do hope Edna will bring you down to call soon," she concluded, and sailed away toward more congenial company in the kitchen.

"Yes—and have you both freeze me out by talking nothing but war—or worse, trying to talk of other things," Clotilde muttered after her. Clotilde was in a decidedly peevish frame of mind. The war had worked into her nerves.

"Tell a fool a thing often enough, and tell it with sufficient conviction," she chastised herself, "and any fool'll believe it! But I won't believe it will be the greatest day in the history of the world when an American army gets into Berlin. It may be an important historical event—but it won't be the most important—which is quite an admission for a semi-Pacifist, even an ailing and generally disgusted one, to make!"

Dinner, for her, was something of a misery; the conversation was always hovering around the outskirts of the war, and always being shooed away by the two enthusiasts responsible for its hovering. Clotilde, by dessert-time, had reached a state of vivid exasperation. A passing comment on the stewed prunes that served for

dessert to the effect that war economy was already going into effect in the household, shooed away by another, from Edna, to the effect that she wanted to make a considerable contribution, in Artie's name, to the Red Cross, now that the war meant so much to them, and that in turn shooed away by the palpable shooing remark that it was such a wonderful summery evening for October—Clotilde, with shining eyes, unnaturally rosy face, rose from beneath the crushing last straw.

"Please," she said, looking from Edna to Mrs. Parkinson, "why can't we talk about the war? It *is* interesting—and perhaps I'm not such a hide-bound Pacifist as you think I am. At least I can understand how intensely important the war is to both of *you*."

They looked at her with a far-away, superior air; so temeritous youth, venturing with lightly understanding, intellectual feet on emotional and sacred ground, was ever reproved. Mrs. Parkinson said, somewhat sadly: "I try not to think of the war in its relation to *myself*. I realize that the war is not important because it is intensely important to *me*."

Edna said, with the same air of sage chiding: "Dear, ever since I read Artie's letter, I've understood how *small* I am—the war isn't intensely important to *me*—I'm beginning to get it in its right perspective—thanks to Artie, and Mrs. Parkinson, and the Major."

Clotilde's cheeks flamed; her emotions were reaching the sharp edge of intensity which they had reached nearly four weeks before, while she watched beside Helen Hope. "Well, if the war's your *private property*—" she snapped out, before she could stop herself; then, realizing her miserable failure at calmness, even at any

adequate and explosive retort, she jabbed her spoon into the remnants of her stewed prunes—she hated stewed prunes, anyway, and their war-connection didn't improve their flavor—and strode into Edna's bedroom. At Edna's most earnest solicitation, she had accepted a drawer in Edna's bureau and a cot in the living-room, as her accommodations in the house of Kling.

Edna immediately followed her, bearing gifts of healing: "Clo'—dearest *child*—I hope nothing we said—"

"I'm not a *child*—I've attained my majority—even if I am a fool!" snapped Clotilde, as well as she could with a mouthful of hairpins. She was frantically taking down her hair, frantically preparing to dress, so that she might put that house and all its dust, war-dust, behind her. "Yes, Edna, I *am* acting like a baby—I'm exasperated—please make my apologies to Mrs. Parkinson. I'm going to dress, now—even babies have to be suitably dressed!"

"Well, dear—" Edna's patient voice might have soothed a genuine year-old, whatever its tolerant, slightly supercilious patience did to Clotilde. "Then we'll hope to see you—when you're dressed."

Quite gently, as one might do to a ructious infant, Edna closed her raging guest in with her ragings and went away.

Clotilde raged quite a bit. She raged against Edna, and war, and Militarists, and Pacifists, and Greenwich Village, and Clement Townes, and Woodbridge, and the world in general. By the time she had dressed herself in her Quaker costume, thoughtlessly adding the gray kid pumps even though she expected soon to be walking, she felt much better. The Quaker costume, by its contrast

with her somewhat overheated intervals, calmed and quieted her. She liked herself in it. If she should happen to meet a certain Mr. Townes, it would convey to him an inkling of the cool gray calmness with which he might expect to be treated. Provided, of course, that the Major, after listening to a Pacifistic interpretation of Clement's finer feelings and psychological revulsions, left one limb of Clement untorn from every other.

It was nearly eight o'clock; thanks to the Woodbridge ladies' war-talk, dinner had been late; she might meet Clement, perhaps on the path, perhaps on the road. Otherwise, she would go right down to the Inn, write him a note, order a car, and away to Kingston and New York. New York, while offering no very definite appeal, was infinitely preferable to Woodbridge, hotbed of a particularly insulting and irrational form of Militarism that it had become.

She took out her coat, the long gray melton one that she had bought in spite of its military cut; she never thought of it by its ridiculous designation of "Ladies' London Military Trench Coat." She would need a hat, of course, on a trip to New York, even if her baggage had to come later. She selected a little round evening turban that could easily be concealed in a fold of the big coat. She intended to make no farewells; like Artie, she would rusefully avoid that sentimentality; she would go for a walk, and continue, by motor and train, to New York. A handbag, containing her ready money and the keys to her mother's apartment, also readily concealable in the coat, need be her only baggage.

Fully prepared, further inspirited by her ruse, she went out into the living-room. Edna and Mrs. Parkinson had

their heads together over the supper-table. Mrs. Parkinson turned around and Edna looked up as Clotilde appeared.

"I'm going for a little stroll—perhaps I'll meet Mr. Townes," said Clotilde, standing all grace and gentleness and soft color before them, as radiant a Quakeress as ever graced protracted meeting or music hall. "Mrs. Parkinson, please let me apologize for losing my head at dinner."

"My dear, I understood perfectly!" Mrs. Parkinson rose, a fine figure of a *grande dame*, and held out her hand. "We were—really quite *gauche*! I know you'll overlook it. And I'm positively going to *make* Edna bring you down for tea—right away!"

"Thank you *so* much!" said Clotilde, nodded at Edna, and strolled forth, across the porch, down the path, into the starlit, blue-misty, warm-crisp October night.

She walked slowly, made more sure of herself, more ready for any emergencies in the way of meeting a man, by her very creditable leave-taking. There was no such adventure as meeting a man, all the way across the meadows, through the grove of half-denuded maple and hickory trees, over the little wooden bridge across the brook, up to the stile that led onto the road. She paused at the stile; she missed the half-expected adventure; she was in a fine, high-strung mood, a mood proper for a great adventure—such as informing a man she had summoned from France—or from Naples, it appeared—

Why Naples? What had he been doing in Naples? Why hadn't he answered her cable, if, as it appeared, he had received it—if, as further appeared, he had been

moved by it to seek her out, even in the wilds of primeval Woodbridge?

For perhaps fifteen minutes she stood by the stile debating these questions, and a more immediate one, namely, what was keeping Clement? The lack of satisfactory answers to any of them did not soothe her ruffled state of mind, nor cool her heated emotions. Physically, in the course of that waiting, she did get rather chilly; she debated putting on the lady's London military trench coat that she carried under one arm, but that would have spoiled the effect of the Quaker costume, not to mention leaving her with a hat and a handbag on her hands. As a substitute, she walked back and forth along the path through the meadow, toe-dancing a little to set her blood in motion.

—“What on earth is keeping him?” she asked the stile petulantly, returning to it for the third time. The stile, being wooden throughout, made no response other than to permit the missing Clement to rise from the roadward side of it, leap lightly over it as if it had been a hurdle, and descend at the startled lady's side.

“Well—” He recovered himself with creditable celerity, bent forward, swept the ground with a sample of the latest New York mode in young men's soft hats. “I thought it was you coming! Your walk, you know —you walk like a queen, Clo'! Your walk and your eyebrows—you know I always said those were your two perfections—one more than is possessed by any other lady on the face of the globe!” He reached for her right hand, the one not busy holding the trench coat and the other commodities; she let him take it. She was

astonishingly compliant, it occurred to her, everything considered.

"I was beginning to think the Major had murdered you," she said. "I believe he's addicted to murder—even more than most military men."

Corporal Townes laughed, laughed like a boy, with whole-hearted appreciation. "He is a rather fierce old party, isn't he?" commented the Corporal. "Well, he would have murdered me—if I'd accepted half the stuff he tried to make me drink! I told him I was a Prohibitionist—got away without touching a drop; and left him happier than if I'd put away all the stuff in the dozen odd bottles he trotted out—he's strong for Prohibition—in the army!"

Clotilde looked at him, at his effervescent boyishness, and could not find it in her heart to send him away, at once, in search of a motor to bear her to Kingston, where night trains might be boarded for New York. If she was Hagar, driven out of the camps of the bloodthirsty Philistines, or something like that, he made a very good Ishmael, a boon companion for her loneliness. Her feeling toward him, she had told herself several times during her recent strolling, much resembled a motherly tolerance.

"Then you and the Major didn't quarrel?" she asked.

"Say not! No, I'm all blue and ace-high with the Major! Say, he's a peach—hope the devil he *does* get over—But, say!" He came a little closer to her, lifted a warning finger. "A warning—sweet Quakeress—a word about Prohibition!" He was very close to her now, his hat tucked under one arm, his smooth, clean-cut, long-nosed face, impishly solemn, within a few inches of

hers. "Know why I refused all that beautiful booze, eh? Tell you! Not that I was overstrong for Prohibition, but thought *you* might be." He backed away a little, and delivered his announcement from a distance that made it less threatening: "You know—'the lips that touch liquor shall never touch mine!' All the way up here, Clo'—in fact ever since I saw you there when Mrs. What's-her-name sprung her little surprise—for which she coached me all the way to the house—all the way, all the time, you know, I been wondering whether you wouldn't let me kiss you—this evening—have, really!"

Clotilde's bosom heaved; his stand-offishness robbed her of any excuse for showing other emotion, either pro or anti. "You're just as wild as ever, Clement," she said; evidently the emotion was supposed to be anti. "Do I *look* as if I were expecting anyone to kiss me?"

He had to come closer to make sure how she looked; he accomplished the manœuvre with such delicacy that a timorous bird wouldn't have been alarmed, such was his every evidence of pure intellectual curiosity. Clotilde composed herself into the living image of a blooming young lady not expecting to be kissed; only her bosom heaved, her cheeks glowed.

Corporal Townes, after a lingering inspection that spared neither her cheeks, nor her bosom, nor the little V-shaped expanse of rose-tinted neck between, stepped back, sighed, shook his head. "You don't *seem* to be expecting it," he admitted, with another sigh, and thoughtfully stroked his longish chin. "But, say!" He indicated, by the simple method of pointing a finger at

his forehead, the appearance of an idea. "Say—you look as if you *needed* it—you do, really! And what you *need*, Clo', that's certainly far more important than what you *expect*! Now you take my advice—"

"We're becoming ridiculous! This is no time—"

"—and accept a little—on trial. Just one—a sample, Clo'! Can be returned, if you don't like it—submit half a dozen—same returnable basis—"

"Clement! I tell you—"

"But please, Clo'! Look at me—haven't I come all the way from Naples—beastly old tub that made me seasick all the way over—nothin' to eat but dog biscuit masqueradin's war bread— That's *devotion*, Clo'—that is!" He ventured to pat the outstanding collar of the lady's London military trench coat. "Just one, Clo'—you're so *pretty*, Clo'—I'll be most unhappy if you don't!" He allowed his hat to drop, and patted Clotilde's motionless, nearly nerveless right arm, his own right hand meanwhile voyaging further along the trench coat's collar till it discovered her left arm. "Just one —on your cheek, Clo'—most wonderful color it is—noticed it even in this beastly poor light that keeps me from seeing you—now honest—" He was bending over her; she was as resistless as a charmed bird, and her breast fluttered like a bird's. "It won't hurt—really—and just one!" He had kissed her lightly on the cheek, her left one, and was standing away from her, a good two feet away, with his arms folded across his breast, before she knew what had happened.

And yet, even before she caught her breath again, she knew what had happened, knew it with a depth of understanding, a dazzling illumination, totally beyond the

horizon of a less Modernistic young person. Even in the midst of a swaying turbulence of emotion that might have thrown a know-nothing Miss on the mercy and generosity of a not naturally merciful and generous young male, Clotilde kept command of their joint adventure, as she had to do for love's prosperity, seeing that not one man in thousands can learn of love except a woman pass along to him her knowledge of it, granted to her, together with other terrible and beautiful responsibilities by whatever Chance or Providence rules the world. Therefore, according to its Priestess's probity is the prosperity of Love among mortals.

Clotilde said, not frightened by ignorance of the impending things, but calm and deeply glad: "You're not the same, Clem—I was quite wrong. You're like a great big, fresh, bumptious, irresponsible boy! What's become of your sophistication, your cynicism—your grand old age?"

He confessed to surprise, even to shock: "Say! Speaking of sophistication—"

"Oh, that bit of observation didn't require any sophistication. It sticks out all over you—and it's quite interesting."

"To me, too! I like to be talked about, like to be noticed." He stared at her; his arch-eyebrowed appearance told her that he was interested not only in her analysis of himself, but in the person who'd made it. "Say—you're perfectly right. Seeing you coming—waiting for you behind that old stile—well, it made me feel downright kiddish, you know."

"I see—it's merely one of your sprightly moods—we'll soon have you delightfully bored and cynical again,"

said Clotilde; she was somewhat disappointed, not that that affected the main event. The main event was quite inevitable, no matter what he was or was not, or had or had not become. The stars in their courses had decided that she was to love him. She remembered passages from Modernistic books. Her recent hatred of him, she recognized now, was a mere contribution to the main event.

"Oh, I say—no—no, I don't think so!" he protested, considerably stirred, as he had every right to be, by the manifest disappointment in her voice. "It's really deeper—the change in me—than meeting you here, Clo'—than being quite delightfully on the verge of falling in love with you! Yes—I mean it, dear—I suppose it'll sound strange to you, I dare say you won't believe me—well, I won't press it now—"

She laughed at him a little: she was very wise, at least by comparison with him. So an experienced hunter might laugh at a bumptious young lion walking dignifiedly around a steel-barred prison and beginning to scent the nearness of a trap. What a fine young ignoramus he was! "But we were talking about your boyishness," she said, distracting his attention before he might be too rudely shocked by other discoveries; she shuddered a little, for a slight crispness was coming into the mellow warmth of the northward flowing air. "You're chilly!" he decided, instantly, making her glad that she was. "Can't I help you on with your coat—or shall we go back to the house—or—"

"No: there are visitors—no place to talk," she said, "and if I put on my coat, it'll cover my Quaker costume—which I put on especially for you to admire. Let's

just walk up and down a little while.—If the path's wide enough for two!"

He stepped to her side. "It is—if we may be permitted to link arms—and you'll let me carry your coat." She handed over the coat, with a caution about the bonnet and handbag inside, extended her elbow: "Link up!" she commanded, and continued, in an impersonal way, while he thoroughly obeyed: "Is it your brief experience at soldiering that's renewed your youth?"

"Yes—as a matter of fact—that's it—I hope you'll forgive me for having fallen, temporarily, under the spell of the Militarists." She felt that he shrugged his shoulders. "There's nothing to renew a fellow's youth like getting down to elemental, primeval facts, you know. I hope you'll forgive me if I admit that I found the war—well, stimulating, healthy in its effect on me—in some of its effects, anyway. You see, having something exciting to do—living close to such elemental troubles as sudden and violent death—"

He began to warm to his subject, ceased to apologize for it and for himself: "The fact is—and it struck me as pretty significant—I never really *laughed*, never really guffawed from a full heart, you know—till I'd killed a couple of men—sent them scooting down, with their old boat blazing around them—"

"Boat?" repeated Clotilde, strangely alert.

"The fellows call the 'planes boats," he explained; he seemed a little apologetic, whether because of his confessed amusement in murder, or because the fellows committed the indignity of calling their airplanes boats, was not quite clear. "It came from air-boat, I guess."

"Yes; go on." Her voice was quick and nervous.

Then she was really interested. He obeyed with a good will: "Well—when I saw them going—after they'd failed to get me—from having been just about scared to death—so scared that I hardly knew I was working the old coffee-mill for all it was worth—my machine-gun, you know—well, it came across me that it was a terrific good joke! Those two Huns—all helmets and goggles and fancy leather clothes—standing up in their old wreck—waving their arms in the smoke and flame from their punctured gas tank—all dressed up, you know, I thought, in the flash before they dropped out of sight—'All dressed up, and no place to go,' I said to myself, 'except good old terra firma—about four miles straight down!' And I laughed—good God, how I laughed! I suppose there was an element of delirium in it—but there is in all hearty laughter, of course."

They reached the little brook, babbling to itself its small immemorial pleasantries, and turned back toward the stile. The wide brown meadow lay in a faint brown mist, faintly lighted because the full moon was but half an hour below the horizon; soon, at a little after nine o'clock, it would be swinging up across the southeast, making the wide peacefulness of the valley more profound, as it had on the night of Helen Hope's death.

"And did you kill many Huns all together?" asked Clotilde, in a voice as brown-velvety as the silence.

He didn't know precisely how to take that. "Of course it's all beastly, cruel, degrading," he began; evidently he took it as containing a large admixture of irony; "but, up here in this heavenly peaceful little hamlet—it's just the place I've been hungering for, too, just the precise place—well, I think you don't get enough

of the war to appreciate—its very volume. You know, if anything's big enough—no matter what it's quality—and you get thrown into it head-first—well, it gets you, unless you're a lot solider-based than I am! It gets you for a while, anyway."

"Some few small echoes of the war have appeared even in Woodbridge," mentioned Clotilde: and there was certainly irony in that. "It gives me a feeling of not being altogether a pariah, at any rate, to know that you have killed your Huns. Most of the war-spirit hereabouts is pure talk."

He got her perhaps unconscious claim of a personal interest in his deeds, at any rate, and pressed her arm for it.

"How many have you killed?" she insisted, dispassionate as the slow drift of the southwest wind.

"Why—" he hesitated, surmising that, at least, she was not actively opposed to considering him an un-Modernistic murderer; "not many. I got in late, when the killing wasn't as good as at first—and I wasn't much of a pilot, anyway. Too old for one thing. My twenty-seven years were against me—the best hunters are boys just out of their 'teens. You see, I'm only a Corporal—after nearly four months of it."

"How many?"

He admitted, as one might admit a regrettable but unavoidable accident: "There were six black crosses on the old boat when I left her. You know, we put a black cross on the side as our Wild West bad men used to put a notch on the butt of their revolvers—meaning, one more down."

There was no doubt about the regret in his voice as

he finished; he was downright melancholy, wistful. "When a new man got her, they painted out the crosses, of course." He sighed, sighed with a catch in his voice that made the sigh almost a groan, for those painted-out crosses on the old boat, for the getting of her by a new man. Clotilde, pacing slowly by his side, turned to look at him, at the profound melancholy of his drooping profile. "Why did you quit?" she asked.

Her level voice gave him no new suggestion; he shrugged his shoulders. "For the same reason that I shouldn't be talking about it—thinking about it—that I ought to be doing something else—making love to you, by preference!" He became increasingly voluble, and there was no hint of love-making in his bitterness. "I expected to lie to you about it—I had a fine line of good, solid Modernistic lies all made up—expressly to please you, you know—to make it easy for me to have a good, lively Modernistic affair with you—for, after your cable, I succeeded in convincing myself that it might mean an affair. Unless you did it on a bet. Or when you were irresponsible with Greenwich Village cheer. Or in order to do your bit in spreading desertion among the poor deluded fighting men. Say, would you mind telling me why you *did* send that cable?"

She soothed him like a mother, or like a young lady who knew a great deal more about many important matters than he did: "Now, Clem, dear—don't get excited; if I owe you anything, and I admit a debt, I'll pay. You know, I merely asked you why you quit—not that why you quit makes any difference to me—that is, any *great* difference. Why did you?"

He was both soothed, and disgusted. "I don't want

to collect any damned debt; I came back hot-foot to do it, but now I'm damned if I will!—I swear, I don't know what's got into me—into us, rather! We were getting along so swimmingly—”

“*I do.*”

“*You what?*”

“*Know what's got into us.*”

“Well—I think I know the Modernistic patter well enough to diagnose your diagnosis: a light little romance has bumped into elemental differences—”

“That has nothing whatever to do with it.”

They had reached the stile again; Clotilde wheeled them around, started them back toward the brook. The meadow was lightening a little; a saffron flush above the blue-misty ridges to the southeast presaged moon-dawn. Corporal Townes took no notice whatever of it, but Clotilde saw it, felt it, and smiled. “If you had a little more Modernism, Clem,” she remarked conversationally, “instead of the ordinary male smattering, you'd understand many things much better than you do. You'd understand, for instance, that I am emotionally and intellectually in love with you—which is only a more definite way of saying that I'm heels over head in love with you. Moreover, and quite as important, I'm beginning to make you, not lightly and debt-collectingly, but thoroughly, in love with me.”

Corporal Townes stopped, withdrew his arm from hers, stared down into her Quaker-calm face from his good two inches of superior height.

“Now don't let that dose of plain truth make you do anything irrational, abrupt—un-Modernistic!” she cautioned him. “Everything in season!”

"Yes—" admitted Corporal Townes, in the midst of his season of complete confoundment.

"Then don't stand there gawking as if something unusual had happened," Clotilde ordered: "at least nothing that ought to seem unusual to a Modern man. Or to any other kind with his eyes about him! Here—take my arm, now, you goose, and let's walk on and continue our conversation—about Hun-killing."

The Corporal obeyed only to the extent of taking her arm and walking on. "Clo"—you queer mixture—you Sphynx—" he was beginning.

"Of course, it's largely propinquity," said Clotilde, also, for the moment, disregarding the interrupted conversation about Hun-killing. "That, and your appearing unexpectedly—and forcing me to admire you by seeming to be so everlastinglly admirable to Major Parkinson—and your long voyage just to see me—yes, I agree with you, that was *devotion!* It showed you *wanted* me pretty badly—and I happened to be in a peculiarly acute state of *wanting* to be *wanted!* If you hadn't been half the man you seem to be, I'd have fallen in love with you just the same—and you, after that stimulating cable and long, hard trip—you *had* to fall in love with me, a little, anyway, if I'd been as unlovable as a bale of hay! You see, it's all as simple and inevitable—"

"Which you're *not!* Oh, you stunning little Quakeress—" Corporal Townes, in spite of some opposition at his left flank, was executing a turning movement intending to bring him face to face, in immediate contact, with the—not with the enemy. The not-enemy forced him back into his previous position with sharp pressure

on his left wing, and a scattered volley: "Now—please—not yet—Clem, I'm too full of ratiocination to want to be hugged and kissed just now—and you don't want to enough, anyway!"

"I do—I swear I never wanted anything so much!" complained Corporal Townes, full of confused hopes and routed purposes.

"Not half as much as you will a little later—if you'll just consent to ratiocinate for the present—till I'm ratiocinated out!"

"Maybe you're right—though it doesn't seem possible!"

"Well—you take my word for it—because I *know*—dear. There—you are an angel to let me manage things—and I'll make you glad you did, before this night is over. You see, you dear, irresponsible male—"

"Oh, Clo'—Clo'—"

"Well, you are—see Forel, Chapter Sixteen,—or wherever it is. Now, continuing our ratiocination, what did you mean by saying that I wasn't simple and inevitable?"

"You are—precisely—I didn't say it!"

"Yes, you did."

"At least my opinions are my own—I didn't!"

"But you *did*, you know. When I was explaining how our falling so suddenly and completely in love was simple and inevitable, you said—'Which you are not!'"

"Oh—that—I was referring to what you'd just said—if you were as unlovable as a bale of hay. I said, 'Which you are not'—plain truth—only not put strong enough!"

Clotilde philosophized: "There is something about

the plain truth—about frankness, straightforwardness—dear—that appealed to me in you, Clem—and that comes of your return to youthfulness, I suppose. It was just that—your going so frankly right after me—that made me let you kiss me on the cheek, back there, when I was still debating whether I'd fight down all my instincts, wreck my nerves, plunge myself into a slough of misery—by denying myself to you. It's singularly sweet—just to be frank with each other about love—about everything—isn't it? I know I'd be perfectly miserable if I had to pretend that I didn't love you! I suppose, according to all good old doctrine, I should still be pretending that I don't?"

"Down with all old doctrine!" declaimed the vivified Corporal. "This suits me! Think how miserable I'd be if you *were* pretending!" He waved his hand at the stars. "Oh, for my old boat—we'd go for a soar—my old boat with her two brown wings—and two hundred horse-power in her steady old heart—Aunt Lindy, I used to call her, Clo'—she could climb a mile in five minutes—a Nieuport single-seated fighter—Clo'—"

"Yes, dear!"

"I guess I'm getting weepy about her, Clo'! About her and about the old coffee-mill she carried on her bonnet, Clo'—the gun, you know—"

"Yes, dear."

He laughed suddenly, shrugged his shoulders: "Well, I can't be weepy for more than a minute about anything with *you* around! You're the best thing that's ever happened to me—I can fairly feel my damned nerves steadyng up already—and I feel as reckless as the devil! I tell you, you can't appreciate what that means to me

—why, I've been able to work myself up into a first-class weep any time in the last six weeks just thinking about Aunt Lindy! Now—well, she was a good boat, but the new man can have her. They'll give me a new one—and you bet I'll see that my six crosses are on her side before I lift her off the ground!"

Clotilde caught her breath sharply: "You're going—back?"

He turned, stopped, faced her; he had almost forgotten her, the very look of her seemed to startle him. "Yes—sorry I came out with that so soon—though perhaps it's just as well," he told her. "I—forgive me—I didn't think that we'd *really* fall in love with each other, Clo'. I have—you see—only today and tomorrow. I ship day after tomorrow morning—although, of course, it's against all regulations for me to tell you when I ship, and I hope you'll forget it."

They had stopped near the little brook; it babbled its small immemorial pleasantries, jests and quips that had to do with the spring, under a rock-ledge, from which it bubbled into daylight, high up under the shoulder of Teyce Ten Eyck; shy mention it made of the mating irises it had passed in the watery meadow above the Hooghtyling farmhouse, and offered a few complaints about the big boulders it had tumbled over as it passed a hundred yards from the Brooks' boarding house. It was one of the few absolute Woodbridgians; nothing outside of its little corner of Woodbridge interested it at all.

"Clem, dear—"

"Yes, Clo'—"

He took her face in his two palms, and they stood look-

ing at each other with some of the awe and wonder and fear and great glory of the two Huguenot lovers in the old, well-beloved picture.

A broad golden sector of the full moon thrust suddenly above the southeastward horizon, and shone upon them.

"I really think—I really love you," she whispered weakly, and he kissed her, rather as a battle-bound knight might kiss some holy image than as fervent lover his willing mistress. On the forehead he kissed her, and on both temples, and on the lips.

A little while later, she took his hands from her face, and holding them loosely before her bosom, turned to look at the moon-rise.

"The moon's coming up," she said.

"So it is," he agreed.

After that exchange of platitudes, Clotilde smiled at the Corporal and the Corporal smiled platonitously back at Clotilde.

"I suppose I'm taking it—at least I began taking it—entirely too hard," said the girl, while the Corporal bent down to pick up the lady's London military trench coat that he had dropped while otherwise engaged. "It's such a universal experience, most of it, anyway—"

"It isn't at all!" disagreed the Corporal.

"No—it really isn't, is it? For all it's happened, and is happening—"

"*This never happened! It's unique in the history of the world!*"

"Yes, dear." She had a sudden memory of Ethel, and her hennish "Yes, Hen." She began to tell him about Ethel, finding unusual warmth and restfulness in the subject, and they walked back toward the stile. He

chuckled over Ethel's "Yes, Hen," and was quite transported by Clotilde's confession that she knew something of how Ethel felt when she said it.

"But isn't that—that hennish feeling quite un-Modern?" suggested the Corporal. "It is *not!*" Clotilde informed him. "It is a recognized, and approved, feminine instinct. A woman who doesn't, on occasion, feel hennish about a man hasn't found her mate—that's all!"

"I'm learning a great deal this evening," surmised the Corporal politely.

"You are—you're doing nicely," his instructor complimented him. They had come to the stile again. "Now we're going for a walk—a real walk—this meadow isn't big enough for us," she advised him further.

"Yes, dear," he admitted, in a very good imitation of her own hennishness of the moment before, and asked: "Now, was that Modern of me? I admit I felt quite subordinate when I said it."

"It is Modern, absolutely, for you to feel that way, at least half of the time—if not all the time when matters of heart interest are concerned. You are, of course, a babe in arms—"

"Disproved—conditions reversed!" proclaimed the Corporal, catching her up as she started to cross the stile, carrying her over it, putting her down and saluting her stiffly on the other side. "Beg to report that I've read, in some regulations for romance, that stiles were invented to carry sweethearts over; beg to report I've done it!"

"I liked it—it made me feel warm all over!" said

Clotilde, nestling up against him, putting his arm around her waist as a reward for regulations properly observed, even to the immediate relapse of the still-a-bit-stand-offish sweetheart as soon as the stile had been crossed. "See—it doesn't scare me, now, to have your arm around me."

"*Scare* you—and would it have *scared* you—before?"

"Of course, you goose—it would have dangerously quickened my heart action—I might have been over-stimulated into doing something quite cool and unnatural—if you'd showed less natural aptitude for education! Poor girls, poor ladies—how they suffer from under-educated males! A virgin, dear—and I admit I'm glad I am one, since it doesn't argue that I'm so ignorant as to wreck our love at the beginning or to let your necessary and natural impulsiveness wreck it—But we'll soon be imagining we're back in dear old Greenwich Village. I'm wondering which way we'd better go?"

She looked down toward the village, with the white state road skirting its westward edge, to the grove of ancient pines, full of meaning for her. She turned her back to it, looked up on the swelling slope of Teyce Ten Eyck, now flooded with moonlight, its bulky sky-blot softened by moonlit mist, its continuing ridges stretching away in a misty endlessness to westward. "I think it's the mountain," she decreed: "climbing the mountain will be a little like soaring—even if a poor substitute for a soar in your old boat—dear, I didn't miss that, your sudden wish to take me soaring!"

"You didn't? Well—it just came over me like a flood that I'd like to soar away with you—"

"Yes—and it was a most true and natural way of

showing how you felt about me, too. I can hardly get used to your emotions, Clem,—I don't believe you used to own one spontaneous emotion—at least I never knew you to express one. Your way of making love, in particular, might have come out of a Greenwich Village card catalog! I suppose you needed to be de-civilized, a little, —and the war's done it."

"I suppose so," he agreed, with half an eye for other matters. "I say—do you think it would *scare* you now—cause you to do anything downright unnatural and *cool*—if I just—put my arm around you while we walked?"

"It would not—I'd like it!"

"Well—it's quite heavenly that you do!" He slipped his right arm, with exaggerated delicacy, around her waist, took her overcrowded left hand in his. "I don't want to make you do anything unnatural—I adore your—perfect naturalness!" he breathed, with tremendous appreciation, and yet a touch of humor, too.

"It really isn't foolish—it's quite fundamental, dear," she told him. "It will make all the difference in the world, how you make love to me will, you know. I want to be made love to—so that I can love you fully—that's all. I don't want my love for you to be just a cheap case of feminine surrender—for a girl's first complete love *is* a surrender, in nine cases out of ten, just a yielding to cheap, superior, brute force—not, as it should be, a more than willing gift."

"German Kultur," muttered the Corporal thoughtfully, "applied to the domestic relations."

"The Germans *are* the most backward race in Europe—in nearly every way," conceded Clotilde. "If it's

really necessary to kill anybody, I'm glad your business is to kill *them*."

The Corporal asserted: "Oh, it's necessary to kill them all right—the most necessary business in the world today."

"Well—you may be right."

"Look here—I expected to have a high old time with you along Militaristic-Pacifistic lines—unless I concealed my basic Militarism under a lot of glib lies—"

"Oh, I'm reconciled to the slaughter of a few Germans—especially since you make the point that they apply their form of brute-force Kultur to the domestic relations—as they undoubtedly do. I'd never thought of that argument. All good Modernists ought to begin to hate the Germans forthwith—that argument ought to be treated at length—in '*The Masses*' and '*The Seven Arts*,' at least. Really, they have a number of prominent contribs. who ought to glory in it—starting, as it does, with female virginity!"

"Yes—that ought to get them going," admitted the Corporal. He added: "It's been longer than I thought since I was in Greenwich Village; I daresay it could give me shocks."

"It *is* rather more shocking than of yore," said Clotilde. "The war's been bad for it, I'm afraid—everybody's thinking about that brutality over there, with the result that the dancing, free-loving element have things pretty much their own way. I'm sorry—for I always liked the old Village—and it really wasn't so shocking in the old days—except, perhaps, in its frankness. You could hear of more impropriety, and see less of it, there, than in most communities. It's done a lot for me, bless

its unconventional, romantic, dramatic, very young, and appallingly honest heart! It was like a boarding school of the Applied Humanities: every young thing, especially every girl, ought to have attended for a season or two. Of course many irresponsible young males—such as yourself—considered it merely a good hunting ground. Which was very good for the girl students—as long as they didn't lose their heads."

The Corporal asked, after some moments of silent consideration, "Clo', did you always talk as frank common sense as you've been talking this evening? Or is it only that I'm in a proper frame of mind to appreciate you?"

"Oh, I'm a graduate of the Village Seminary, now—and I've been taking a little P. G. course in Woodbridge; I suppose, too, you are in a particularly receptive frame of mind." She raised her eyebrows at him. "I daresay my attitude toward killing Germans, attained after much soul-searching and absorption of Woodbridge treaties on emotional reactions to Hun-hunting, has won me a high place in your estimation. Well—I really don't mind your killing as many as you can—I only wish you didn't have to begin again so soon!"

"Lord—and don't I! But, in view of my short time here—and considering the discreet surroundings—" They had come to the turn in the road, a little way below the Brooks' lower meadow, the identical turn where a blackberry briar had so disturbed Skeeter—and Clotilde, too. The Corporal explained what he was getting at by gently stopping their progress and kissing her gently on the nearest cheek. She put up her mouth to kiss him back. "Your kisses are wonderfully

sweet to me, dear," she told him, which made him quite prodigal of them on her hair, her forehead, her eyes, her nose, her chin, even the little dimple at the base of her throat; but they were all discreet kisses, cool and soft, such as a maiden very much in love, but still far from being wholly won, deserved. He kissed her hand, as they walked on, wonderfully uplifted in the midst of a great inner and outer peace, and she lifted his hand and held it against her cheek.

"If I'd only got your cable sooner!" he said, touching the warm smoothness of her cheek and throat with love-sensitized finger-tips. "You see, I'd gone to Naples, dear, nearly a month before—to try and come back. I was all in—I had the trouble that war-flyers, especially the older ones, are so prone to—something like a psychological revulsion against flying—something deeper than their wills. About four months usually knocks out all but the best and youngest of them—I lasted four months, anyway! And I didn't go to pieces everlastingly—as a good many of them do. In fact—if a visiting officer hadn't caught me—just as I was preparing to go up—hadn't recognized the symptoms—I might have lasted a few weeks longer. Not that it wasn't better for me to be sent off when I was—gave me a better chance to come back, I mean."

She asked: "What were the symptoms—he saw—dear?"

"Well—frankly—acute nausea. I sat there retching like a sick pup while they were starting my engine. I suppose all air work is done in a sort of over-stimulated condition—it has to be—and, after a time of it, something breaks. I was quite accurate when I told the

Major, this afternoon, that I'd been wounded in my finer feelings."

"And now—you think you're ready to go back?"

"I hope I shall be. Thanks largely to you. You see, the cure is just getting your mind off the war—resting—putting your mind and body to other uses—a good deal of drinking, of women, of physical exercise, and of solid food are commonly considered essentials. Well—I was taking the cure in Naples—without, as I've told you, very good results.—You didn't get my cable, telling you I was coming?"

"No." She was subdued; without seeming to make a point of it, she so turned to glance up the hillside beside her that he would have had to use force to keep his arm around her waist. She released his hand at the same time, and a little gap widened between them.

He put both his discarded hands into his pockets. "I think I know why you didn't get my cable—as well as why you don't seem to need my hands, and my arm, any longer," he told her; he was not particularly cast down, his voice said, he was ready to accept the consequences of unfortunate facts, and be glad they were no worse. "The same explanation goes for both, probably. I mean, I received your cable, and wrote an answer to it, while I was quite drunk, drunk at least to the prescribed point of utter relaxation—and, quite possibly, the woman who was with me, and managed to see both your cable and my answer, got my answer from the waiter by whom I sent it to the nearest telegraph office. She left me, and was gone some little time, after I'd sent the man out with the message—using her as my interpreter.. I suppose she bribed the waiter—and tore up my message. I

thought of that, afterward, when I was on shipboard."

" You were in a café?" asked Clotilde.

" Yes." Both question and answer were highly unemotional. He began, with some warmth: " I suppose I ought to crawl about this, Clo'—but it simply isn't in me to crawl—very much; and you're Modern enough to understand about—some things. I was really fond of the girl—and her love made me more of a man, less of a floppy-stomached chicken—"

" Her love?"

" Well, yes—it was love—not of a high order perhaps, and yet I won't lie about it—it was, essentially, love. She was a very nice girl. The war had so wrecked her father's business—he was the owner of a shoe-store dealing in American shoes,—that she calmly set out to capture an invalided soldier with money, and she lit upon me. I was glad she did; I needed her as part of the recognized cure for funk. She made the payment of a good round sum her first stipulation; but after that we got on a more human basis. I seriously considered marrying her, or at least bringing her back to New York with me. But your cable wrecked that. She couldn't hold a candle to you, of course—that's a plain fact—I see we're dealing in plain facts now—and not a compliment. I saw that any even semi-permanent relation with her wasn't possible—and set out on the wild goose chase that landed me here this afternoon. By the way, now is as good a time as any for you to tell me why you sent that masterly cable—for it was something of a masterpiece—that simple, 'Come. Clotilde.' Surely you didn't expect we'd fall, really, in love with each other?"

"As much as you may be surprised to hear it—I really did."

"Well—you never showed any signs of it."

"I wasn't ready—and you were a good deal less ready."

"I see," he said; and, after that, neither of them said anything, nor looked at anything but the moonlit brown road before them, for some minutes. They had passed below the wide, terraced lawn of the Brooks' boarding house, passed the array of big white barns and outbuildings beyond, and entered the half-mile zigzag of steep, tree-shaded road that led up to the Hooghtylings'. It was an accepted Lovers' Lane for lovers equal to a stiff climb, but there was no loverly suggestion about the two who now strolled, side by side at a lateral distance of five feet, slowly up its moon-checkered solitude.

"Look here, Clo'," said the Corporal; "if I'd come back to find that you—you had had an affair—I mean a real limit affair—and had got over it as thoroughly as I have over mine—that you loved me, in spite of it—yes, and because of it, for little loves are the only measures we have for great ones—well, I shouldn't *deeply* mind. I tell you, I've looked pretty deep into myself—and I believe that's the truth."

"Well, *I* don't believe it, Clem." It was not a harsh denial, but quite final.

"No—you wouldn't—because you haven't been through any shallow affair. Your knowledge of Love, Clo', when all is said and done, is largely theoretical. You wouldn't admit that an affair that had all the physical earmarks of love might no more than scratch the surface—"

"No, I wouldn't—because I know it isn't true. I suppose I—I wanted as much from you as I have to give you, Clem—egotistical as that sounds, dear,—and, of course, I had no earthly reason to expect it—I suppose I should be satisfied,—yes—considering that I believe every word you say—" She came across the road to him and put her hand in the crook of his arm. "—just as every fool woman a lot in love is bound to believe what her lover tells her—no, I don't mean that—"

"I don't believe," he interrupted chokily, "Clo', I've told you one word that wasn't the exact truth, since I met you there at the stile."

She got his nerveless right hand out of his pocket by tugging at his arm, and encircled it with her warm little palm and fingers. "There—I was just going to say that I ought to be more than satisfied—and I am, dear!"

"Well, I'm not." He removed his hand and thrust it back into his pocket. "I'm sorry—the kinder you are to me, the more miserable I feel. I got a downright stinging pain, just then, just from the feel of your wonderful little hand. I guess I *am* crawling, after all, ain't I? Well, I am—I crawl—all over! I'm sorry—and that's the bitter truth.—No, please, dearest girl, don't try to take my hand again—just yet."

"Well—it does me good to see you crawl—but I'd like to hold your hand while you're doing it!"

"Not just yet—I prefer to crawl unaided. Dammit, I'm actually wishing I had remained—I were—a—I never imagined I'd ever—"

"A male virgin—at twenty-seven years old, Clem?" Her voice tinkled with sudden unsuppressible amuse-

ment. "I wonder if I could love you as I do—if you were, Clem—I really wonder!"

"Well—weren't you just—" He was thoroughly mazed.

"You're an awful lot in love, man—you're almost as deep in love as I am!" she told him, and again her voice tinkled. "Who would have imagined that it was in you? I think no other girl was ever blessed with so completely delightful a lover!"

"But, Clo', I'm serious—don't you really *care* that I have—that I'm not—"

"Don't I *care*? Listen to him! I care, dear, so that it almost broke my heart, so that my very knees almost collapsed under me—when you were telling me about that other poor girl. But it's all such an awful mess—until things change so radically—until men learn more—yes, and until girls learn more, too—Oh, Clem, it's such a frightful mess that I'm nearly mad with joy to find that you've been able to bring me a love out of all the mess—a love as big and pure and true—as I think you have, Clem! And now—" She barred his way, putting up her arms: "I think it's time for you to kiss me some more, Clem—and hold me close to you, dear!"

He kissed her many times, and held her close to him, all her silken-gowned, slender beauty, interrupting himself to sniff and, quite mawkishly, got out a handkerchief wherewith to dab at his eyes. While he dabbed, he gawked down at her, holding her close with one arm, so completely unmanned that he didn't know that he was dabbing, that there was something suspiciously like a tear on the end of his long nose. Nor did she notice it, at least she saw it in no normal prospective if she did. For

a good minute they lived on the crest of the greatest wave of emotion that had lifted them since they had laughed together in that first lively ripple at the stile. They had sailed far out since then; immensities of sea and sky were around them. In the midst of ancient, familiar, and everlasting mighty and awesome forces, with world-end winds whitening the rollers around them, it was small wonder that every sign of a leak in their frail craft, even a little natural creaking and groaning of the rigging, sent their hearts into their mouths, sent them into each other's arms with something like the fear of death in their eyes. They had never taken that voyage before, course and ship, even themselves, each to the other, were a little strange, untried. It is the prerogative only of well-traveled mariners to scoff.

Then the wave passed, leaving them in the great trough that followed it, rather snugly shut in together, with only little ripples catching the moonlight all around. So they ventured to smile a little at their recent emotion.

"At least, I shan't feel jealous of Aunt Lindy any more," Clotilde confided to him, setting their course onward and upward, holding his arm and hand close against the playing muscles of her lithe side: "I can make you weepy, too!"

He explained: "Oh, the old boat was only my Aunt; you're a thousand times more. You can not only make me weep: you can make me commit suicide—or jump through a hoop—anything."

"I wish I could give you as much joy as getting back to her—or to another like her—will."

"But you can, you do—a thousand times more!"

"Now, go slow. You know that isn't true."

Even the wave-trough, it appeared, showed some turbulent spots.

"It *is* true. My joy in the idea of returning to my dear relative, and my joy in being with you, are quite different—and the joy of being with you is at least a thousand times greater."

"What nonsense! If I asked you not to return to that dangerous relative—she may break your dear neck any day, you know, even if she doesn't get you shot or exploded, or something like that—but if I asked you just to stay with me, and let someone else risk his life with her—would you?"

"Uh—well—that isn't a fair question. You see—"

"There. My point's proved. Not that I'm particularly interested in it, for I'm not going to ask you. I suppose I'm frivolous—I feel rather frivolous. I'm having such a *thoroughly* good time! The very best I ever had—or expect to have—until you come back from killing Huns. I must make the most of it. If you don't mind, I'd like to kiss you on the nose. You have too large a nose for your face, but I rather like it. Because it's yours, of course. Utterly irrational! Yes, I mean it—put your nose down here!"

He put his nose down there.

"Did that other girl—that poor Italian girl you left when you got my message—did she like your nose, too?"

"I don't know that she ever mentioned it.—I'd rather not talk about her, dear."

She answered, with some determination: "Well, Clem—I only want to say one more thing about her, and then I'll not mention her again. I'm glad the memory of her hurts you a little—it ought to. I was only going to say,

dear, that I pity her so! It wasn't fair—it was cruel; and, when you were talking so in your character of irresponsible male, of 'actually' thinking of marrying her—of realizing that even a semi-permanent relation with her wasn't possible—Oh, Clem, I pitied her—and I pitied you, too."

He fumbled for her meaning: "Of course—I pitied her—"

"And weren't you pitiable, too? Isn't it rather pitiable that you cheapened love—or haven't you really reached the place where you don't want love—our love—to be cheap?"

"Yes. I understand you now. I've already crawled for that!" The Corporal was inclined to bitterness.

"Perhaps it's unfair of me to bring it up again, but I wouldn't be Modern, I wouldn't be true to my Greenwich Village training—"

"Oh, *damn* Greenwich Village!"

"No, let's not. If it hadn't been for Greenwich Village, I wouldn't have had the intelligence to send you that cable, nor to—Oh, many important matters, past, present, and future, might be quite impossible if it hadn't been for the dear old foolish Village. Don't you know that?"

"All right—three cheers for the Village! In some ways you remind me of a steam roller, Clo'. I'm sorry I said anything. Have you any further catechism for me?" He was quite humble, if a trifle bitter, as a somewhat flattened-out young man had a right to be.

"Yes—I have one more question—a most serious one."

The Corporal braced himself: "Well—shoot!"

"Don't you—still love me, Clem?"

The Corporal enthusiastically welcomed the sugar-plum.

"Clo'—you—you globule of quicksilver—but yes, yes a thousand times—it's only—only, you know—that we seemed to be getting mixed up with sordidnesses—"

"Well, then, let's forget the 'onlies'—I don't think there are going to be any more of them, now: I think you might—just show—by your actions—"

The Corporal, given a hint in the proper direction by discovering the lady's arms around his neck, showed by his actions. "Maybe, dear," she philosophized contentedly with her head in the hollow of his shoulder while he kissed and stroked her hair, "maybe it makes love richer—the presence of a few sordidnesses does, you know—more human, I mean,—not such a bright ethereal perfection as becomes a little insipid. I wonder if the perfect young men and maidens of a thousand years from now will love as deeply, and richly, as we poor erring creatures can? It's a hard problem, isn't it—always to be striving at perfection, some Dantesque Heaven, and wondering if we wouldn't be sick of it as soon as we got it? Maybe I couldn't love you as well, if you hadn't been so wicked—just now, I'm almost sure I couldn't.—Honestly, Clem, wouldn't you love *me* better if I'd fallen—at least once?"

"Seriously, that's a problem," he admitted. "I don't think I would—because I don't think it's in me to love you more than I do."

"But if I only had some affair to confess," she persisted, "some affair striking no deeper into the real me than your affair with the Italian girl did into you

—mighthn’t that tap some unsuspected reserve of loving in you—stir up jealousies, passions, that, in their reaction, would make you love me more?”

“I suppose I should be expected to swear that it wouldn’t—but the plain truth impels me to say that I don’t know!”

“Suppose I’d fallen to the spell of a nymph-and-faun passion—right up on one of the hills near here—with a fresh, faun-like country-boy,—faun-like to the extent of smelling of the stables a little—for he did smell of the stables, a little—although it would be more proper if he’d smelled of the sheep he helped the Arcadian shepherds tend, I suppose—and suppose he’d been so completely and naïvely captivated by an accidental sight of my—my legs, to be exact—pretty far up—as he was—that I, yielding to purely physical instincts—”

“Thunder and Mars! Hell and damnation! Clo’—Clo’—you—”

“Why, you’re taking it far worse than I took your casual admission about the Italian girl—and yet I don’t see that it’s any worse.—I don’t suppose you know you’re hurting my arms—squeezing them both until they’ll be black and blue for days?”

“I’d like to hurt more than your arms!” Nevertheless the Corporal released them: he had been holding her before him, gripping her two arms near the shoulders as if they had been handles, gripping them as he had never gripped even the levers of Aunt Lindy except in a very squally wind. They stood staring at each other, missing no fineness of expression, thanks to the moon and the half-striped branches of the overspreading trees. Clo-tilde was as demure as any Quaker maiden confessing

a fondness for worldly cake; as for the Corporal, he was such a mixture of fierceness, doubt, jealousy, tenderness, wild suspicions as to make the contortions of his countenance a fit model for the fighting face of an old Japanese warrior. Said Clotilde, gently rubbing each bruised arm with the opposite hand: "I thought you might have some—reserves."

She swayed a little toward him as she said it, either by accident or as a slight hint. The Corporal caught her to him, not gently, and turned her face up so that he could look down into it, gripping her unresisting little chin between the thumb and forefinger of his right hand. "Clo'—you demon—God!—you *didn't*, Clo'—"

"Oh, no—I didn't." She spoke with some difficulty because of an immovable lower jaw. "It might be more stimulating to pretend that I did for a while, but I believe in the plain truth—even if the truth is often pretty flat. I sent him away—and was quite miserable with missing him for some time afterward. You see, I didn't want to cheapen love."

"But, Clo'—" He glowered down at her. He was quite tigerish, still; she lifted her eyebrows, smiled at him, provoking him. With many tinkles as of little silver bells in her voice she said: "Why, the poor little flat truth seems quite stimulating, doesn't it—I dare say you're so wrought up because I admit I missed him—wanted him—perhaps because he saw my—under the circumstances, I think I'd better be cautious—my nether limbs—quite a lot of them, I am afraid—" He kissed her suddenly, hard, and drew back his head to see how she would take it; she gasped a little, her eyelids fluttered; then she lifted her pursed lips. He kissed her

again, not so hard nor yet so briefly, for there was no need for him to look at her to see how she was taking it. Her quivering lips, her whole quivering body, told him that. Another great smooth roller of emotion lifted them, carried them into high, silent regions of awe, wonder, ecstasy. They stood so, seeming almost one flesh, without division in body or spirit, lips answering lips, eyes answering eyes, for seconds that evolved into minutes, nor was there any fear on all of Clotilde's enraptured white face.

"I'm sure," she said, as the wave slowly passed, cradling them gently into a new space of greater calm and peacefulness than they had yet found, "that this is the more proper because I'm within calling distance of my father—he lives right around that bend, you know.—I may consider myself properly chaperoned."

He didn't know about that; he had only the veiled and delicate hints dropped by Ethel, whose regard for the proprieties he had not pushed too far. Clotilde told him the story as they walked up toward the darkened Hooghty-tying farmhouse, with its weather-silvered outbuildings just across the road, all glistening in the steady moonlight.

The Corporal neither enthused over the subject as Mr. Beemis had done, nor became excited about it after the manner of Edna. "I don't suppose it really makes much difference, does it?" he suggested. "You wouldn't say that if you knew that sensible old farmer!" returned Clotilde.

"Why," she went on, "Clem, just by using his head, his solid old Dutch antipathy against being forced into either actions or beliefs—he's become about as thorough

a Modernist as I ever knew! It was his statement of a chief Modernist position on the war that—that rather opened my eyes. ‘Don’t pay to mix in fights goin’ on in t’other end of the village,’ he said. Now what better, more concise—”

“What rot!” The Corporal was aroused. “What do we keep police for, if not to mix in fights at t’other end of the village—before they get to us? We mix in ‘em, all right—by proxy—and that’s what we’ll do in Europe after—”

“Clem, dear—” Her voice was a little mocking, accusing him of excitement over platitudes. “—I only put that forth as a concise and punchy statement of Modernistic belief, by way of introducing you to my admirable father! He’s Modernistic in other ways, too—ways that might meet even your approbation, as they met mine. Why, do you know, he took in all my Modernistic talk without the quiver of an eyelash—cited me women who’d carried on businesses and raised families, without being married, when I spoke of sex freedom—”

“Oh, come! Wasn’t he shocked?”

“He was *not!* He admitted they might be a good deal into it—and it wasn’t only lip-agreement, either! He says he and Ethel get on well together, but that’s because they’re quite extraordinarily well suited to each other—’bout nine out o’ ten o’ the married couples of his acquaintance, he says, would do better if they weren’t married! I wish you could meet him—but, of course, they’ve both gone to bed hours ago—they turn in at sundown, and get up an hour before sunrise—and we wouldn’t be able to talk to him if we met him when

Ethel was around, anyway—Ethel is one of those natural dominants you read about!"

They had come opposite the dark little Hooghtyling front porch. Clotilde stopped, sniffed the air, looked questioningly at the Corporal; the Corporal, being linked to her by one arm, had stopped also, and he met her look with pained innocence.

"Clem, don't you *smell* something?" she asked.

"Why—I—" He sniffed vigorously. "Why—I—there *does* seem to be—"

"Something a little like burning rags?"

"Well—yes—a little. Maybe they left something in the stove—"

"They didn't. That's Henry's pipe!" Clotilde was quite certain of it. "He smokes the most altogether villainous tobacco, in the strongest pipe—a black, thready stuff called 'Mechanic's Delight' in a pipe that looks as if it had come out of the Ark—and been in steady use ever since! I'd recognize that smell anywhere! I'll bet—" She stared hard at the moon-shadowed porch. "—Hen Hoot himself is sitting in there this minute, having a good-night smoke—and looking us over with intense interest. Just wait—I'm going to tiptoe in and see! If we could get him out—without Ethel's hearing—"

The Corporal showed no great enthusiasm at the prospect of making a crowd out of what had been most agreeable company, but Clotilde was already on her way. Over the flags that Ethel had laid, and which considerably made noise enough in spite of tiptoeing so that Ethel might have been apprized of visitors if she had had ears to hear, Clotilde hurried, and up to the porch;

a dark shape near the door resolved itself into the appearance of Henry Hooghtyling, sitting in the little armless rocker, old felt hat pulled down over his eyes, hunched up in an aged overcoat, puffing his pipe with vigor enough to suggest a perturbed mind.

"Surmised it might be you," he informed her, without rising, perhaps so concerned with the cause of his erupting grimness that he forgot the expediency of rising. "Won't you bring in your young man, and set for a spell? I guess you're both ready for it, if you been climbin' that old hill."

His voice had its natural fullness; it was never loud, but, at the moment, it was loud enough to move Clotilde to suggest, in an undertone: "We didn't want to disturb Ethel; we thought you might be sitting here, and I just wanted to ask you to come out and meet—"

"Oh, you needn't worry 'bout disturbin' *Ethel!*" Hen's voice overflowed with exclamatory bitterness as he pronounced the name of his devoted helpmeet: swirling blue raggish-smelling clouds spurted in Clotilde's direction. "They's times," said Hen, controlling himself with an effort that made him hoarse with emotion, "they's times when Ethel's exasperatin'—and when she gits a snorin' spell's one of 'em! It's the most *devilishest*—" He choked, and went on:

"Not that I'm blamin' her for what she can't help—but it's enough to give a man a pain strikes right to his stummick—so help me, Peter!" He raised his eyes and his smoke-bursts toward the ceiling, as if for aid, forgetting both of Clotilde, and her waiting young man, in the flood-tide of his own deep nocturnal woes. "A man can't keep pokin' her in the ribs, once ev'y minute,

f'r hours an' hours! They's limits—he gets wore out! Why, she'll just wake up, and say, 'Yes, Hen,' and the end of the 'Hen' is an '*onck!*'—beginnin' another *snore!* Off an' on she'll git spells like this, last maybe a week—maybe it's cold in her head, maybe she's got ad'noids—by gorry, she's got to have the doctor tommory—and if it's ad'noids, she's gotta have 'em *cut out!* If they's anything to make a man think o' divorce courts—or to wish he'd had the sense never to've got married—"

"I should think you could sleep in another room—couldn't you?" suggested Clotilde faintly. "But, now, won't you just come—"

"That's the trouble th | gettin' *married!*!" Henry was launched again. "You get used to—things—like sleepin' double—and you couldn't sleep, noway, if they was dif'rent.—'Nother *room*—what good 'ud another room do, anyway! Just *listen*—listen to *that!*!"

Clotilde had already heard "that," but it rose mightily in the silence enjoined by Henry; it was reverberent, vigorous, mighty, such a snore as Ulysses might have heard in the Cyclops' cave. "And the bedroom's clean in the back o' the house, next the kitchen, too—'nother *room!*!" Henry growled, raising his voice. "Why, she's shakin' the whole blamed house! I bet the *cows* can hear her, down to the *barn!*!"

He puffed violently, and grew calmer. "Not but what I'm glad you come up—seein's I couldn't get no rest anyway—"

"Oh, we were just out for a walk," said Clotilde, seizing the offered opportunity, "and I thought, if you happened to be up, I'd ask you to come out, and meet

Mr. Townes. He's an old friend of mine, a very good old friend—”

“ Yes; Ethel was tellin' me—I might's well go out, I guess,” interrupted Henry, lost to more than a weak half-interest in anything except snores, completely lost to politeness. He got himself rheumatically out of his chair and accompanied Clotilde, at a creeping waddle, out to the gate. He acknowledged her introduction by a glum: “ Ethel was tellin' me you was a aviator—not but what I don't take much stock into the war—puttin' up prices so that a poor man don't know where he's at—flour sixteen dollars a barrel, right now, down to West Beacon.”

Clotilde was much disappointed in him; even taking into consideration the fact that he was under a strain, that he was not himself, she was disappointed. He blinked owlishly at them, not more than half-awake, far more than half-outraged, disgusted, by the price of flour, the war, aviators, snores, everything. She prepared to present him with something of an awakener. “ Mr. Townes and I are to be—” She broke off with a little gasp. “ We're engaged to each other,” she finished, rather lamely.

In spite of its lameness, that brought him round quite a bit. He went so far as to favor them with a feeble example of his drop-jawed surprise. “ Ah—ho-oh?” he commented, and woke up to the extent of beginning to consider their case rather than his own, to look them over for possibilities. “ Going to get *married?*” he asked, and there was a certain grimness, as well as doubt, in the question.

“ Well—you know, Henry, I've talked to you about—marriage—” Clotilde hesitated: in all that evening's

Modernistic love-making, there had been no word of marriage—even if she had known her then attitude toward marriage, all circumstances considered, she had no inkling of what the attitude of the gentleman most concerned might be.

The gentleman most concerned rushed gallantly into the breach: "We certainly are, Mr. Hooghtyling, if I have anything to say about it!"

"Hm," returned Henry, with some disfavor, and dismissed that un-Modern fighting character to look for wisdom in the face of Clotilde. "We—we haven't altogether decided yet," admitted Clotilde, considerably upset by the saturnine survey of a snore-confirmed Modernist-on-the-subject-of-marriage. "When circumstances—when one is more interested in other things than in demonstrating—the—the—" "Hm," interrupted Henry, with rather more disfavor than he had shown the frankly matrimonially-inclined Corporal. The Corporal murmured, "Why, you old Tartar!" under his breath, and became more respectful of rural wisdom immediately.

Henry, with some irritation, relieved the short silence that followed:

"What I say about marriage is, they might be better things, and they might be worse—some worse. Especially with women—I've knowed two women get on pretty good, raise fam'lies and run their business, 'thout gettin' married—and maybe they was better off than 'bout half the married women around here—what with husbands raisin' the devil, slave-drivin' 'em, lettin' 'em have no money, not even what they've rightfully earnt—even if some o' the men don't spend all they and their wives can make just gettin' drunk down to Kingston or

Saugerties. That's lookin' at it from the woman's side, but sometimes—yes, *sometimes*, the men have it hard, too. I always did say people oughtn't get married less'n they was extraordinary suited to each other—which tarnation few is—and even when they *think* they am—and get on pretty fair together, considerin', for ten-twenty years—somethin's likely to come up to make a man wonder if he wouldn't a-had better sense to stay single. Not but what I don't think the women gin'ly got most cause to regret doin' it—but the men have got some cause, too.—Mind, I ain't sayin' nothin' against it, if you want to go an' do it, but I'm s'prised, that's all." He was addressing this last to Clotilde. "I'm s'prised, that's all; and, if you was to ask me, I'd say, think it over—'member some o' the things you told me, and don't do nawthin' *rash*. I don't say a word against Mr. City, here, but people's got to be extraordinary suited to each other to stand gettin' married—that's all I say! An', even then, though a man couldn't ask for a finer woman, he don't know when she's goin' to start somethin'—not that I'm objectin' to Ethel for somethin' she can't help, though 'memberin' that don't help much when a man's got to set up three nights runnin' till he gets so dead, dog-tired he could sleep through a cyclone, before he can get any rest—in his own house. All I say about marriage is, it's *dub-yous*—that's what it is, it's *dub-yous!* And now I guess—"

Clotilde tried to interrupt: "But I haven't said we've decided—"

"I guess, what with waitin' up and talkin' here when a man's old and good for nawthin's I be had ought to a-been abed for three-four hours," Henry continued,

with a kind of disgusted grumpiness, "I've most reached the place where I could rest easy while the house blowed down, and I ain't good for nawthin', not even talkin', and I guess I got good cause, too, so I'll leave you two, and hope to see you again, when I ain't feelin' more'n half-asleep, nor my stummick so terrible's it's been last two-three days. Night's time for young folks,—and I guess you won't miss me, much—nor mind the free advice I've handed out—" He began to waddle toward the house, growling grumpily: "Young folks most gin'ly got to pay for their schoolin', anyway."

Clotilde, too much put out and surprised to laugh, started up the road; the Corporal made up by laughing uproariously, as soon as they had passed the barns. "He's—father's a *wonder!*!" chortled the Corporal.

"I've never seen him like that—he's usually genial, bland—I hardly knew him—"

"Yes: he did seem to be enjoying a large, blue grouch—and because his daughter was thinking of getting married, instead of—of raising a family and conducting her own business—"

"It wasn't that," Clotilde objected; and related the incident of the snores. "But he did say some things well worth listening to—about marriage—Clem," she finished.

"He did *so!*!" The Corporal admitted it joyously. "Although a Modernist of the Modernists, he admitted that, when people were extraordinarily well suited to each other, they might get married! I hope that settles it!"

"Oh, I don't know—"

"But you admitted we were engaged, dear!"

"I didn't necessarily mean engaged to be married—I *am* engaged to you, dear—there's no question about your having my love—quite *all* of it, dear—"

"But, Clo'—then let's go back to what you said: you said, when one was more interested in other things than in demonstrating the—something or other—"

"Oh, I was thinking of something Arthur Kling said: that, if one was too much interested in doing something beside demonstrating the freedom of the sexes—and that *might* be a good argument."

"It certainly is!"

"I think you'd consider any argument good, just now, that led in the direction of the matrimonial ball-and-chain! What's become of your Modernism, Clem?"

"I've still got it, all right, but I think it's been tempered, a little, by admixture with some archaic facts! Look here, Clo', it's seemed to me lately—I've done a lot of thinking about things in general since I've been on furlough, puttin' 'em up against the background of the war, I suppose—and it's seemed to me that marriage might be worth while as constituting a sort of social recognition—a common convenience—it makes things easier for people, economizes their energies, as social recognition of facts is bound to do. Why, just for instance, it will be much easier for me to write to you, if you're my wife—to see you, if you want to try to get across—"

"Well, then, if it's a mere legal convenience—"

"Clo'—dear—you will?" Somewhat overwhelmed, he tried to stop her, to celebrate the climacteric moment; but it was decidedly not climacteric, even if not down-

right anti-climacteric, to Clotilde, and she refused to celebrate. "It's not of the slightest importance—legal marriage—except as a kind of convenience," she objected: "like our using one trunk, instead of two—or the same looking-glass. Our love's the important thing—and I don't want our attention distracted from it by the consideration of any beastly archaic convenience—and inconvenience—such as marriage! We'll just try to get it over with as painlessly as possible, when we have time and opportunity. I don't need it to make me feel really *married* to you, dear—although just your *wanting* to marry me helps—it makes me feel that you're confident about your love for me—about its bigness and—and durability—as nothing else, I suppose, could. Perhaps even Modernistic men should offer to marry a woman, if they really love her—but as for the actual legal and religious marriage itself—why, I feel every bit as much your wife, your till-death-it-do-them-part wife, right now, as if we were just stepping into the street after the most barbarous of high-church marriages.—Yes, I feel a hundred times more your wife, for then I'd probably be wondering if my veil was on straight—instead of just being glad, all through me, that we'd found each other—that we were going to be so happy and—and useful, I hope—because we'd found each other! As for the legal formula that we'll go through—at the cost of some inconvenience—that's neither here nor there. Don't you feel a good deal about our coming *legal* marriage as I do?"

"Well, I don't entirely—but I'll try to keep my unseemly gratification within bounds!" he said, and laughed. They walked on, not slowly in spite of the

steep, upward road, now narrowed to little more than a bridle-path; the Corporal meditated smilingly, with lowered eyes that finally noticed Clotilde's footgear.

"Clo', dear, you've got on nothing but pumps—and we must have walked miles!" he protested.

"But don't you rather like my pumps?" she returned, pausing long enough to hold one out for his inspection; their delicacy was a little grimed by the dust of the road, but they were still trim enough in their smooth kid grayness, and narrow gray silk ribbons bound them, Greek fashion, to her ankles. He admired them: "They're beautiful—though not quite as Quaker-like, perhaps, as the rest of you!"

"Oh, most of the Quakerishness is outside—I'm quite resplendent underneath: and doesn't thee rather like my Quakerishness, too, friend Clement?"

They made no progress, at least no progress up the road, for some little time after that. "How can a man talk sense, when—" he protested.

"But, friend Clement, is this any night for sense? The moon rebukes thee—we were unfaithful to her, friend Clement, an we were not rank lunatics! Nor will I be unfaithful to her, Diane, Artemis, Astarte, patron goddess of virgins, especially of virgins about—But I fear that my mythology may lead me into unseemly ways, friend Clement, if only into quoting a most unseemly verse of Browning's!"

"Thee is altogether the most wonderful—absolutely distracting Quakeress—"

"I fear any proper Quaker might be shocked, friend Clement, knowing the verse of Browning's to which I refer, and hearing thee!"

"Well, so much the worse for him, then! But, frankly, Clo'—"

"I am all of a frankness, friend Clement!"

"Come, now, dearest girl—here we are miles from anywhere—and it must be eleven o'clock!"

"Thee is a poor guesser. 'Tis a good half-past by my un-Quakerly wrist-watch. We came monstrous slow—thanks to interruptions—for which thee, friend Clement, was responsible—quite as much as myself!"

"But I say, you goose—have you any idea where we're going?"

"None whatever!"

"Well—stop a minute till we talk about it!"

"Let us proceed while we discuss!"

"But I should think you'd be all tired out!"

"Then thee knows little about me—and less about love in general."

"Well, I confess—"

"Is *thee* tired, friend Clement?"

"Not at all! But—"

"Then I am even less tired. Has thee never seen a butterfly—or an eagle, for I like the eagle better—soar when it recognizes its mate?"

"Oh, my dear—"

"Well, I'm soaring, friend Clement; it is thy part just to keep up till I decide it is time for soaring to stop!"

## CHAPTER XIII

A LUCKY CHAPTER, IN WHICH TWO STRAYS, NOT ONLY FROM MANHATTAN MASKINGS, CHARADES, AND AMATEUR THEATRICALS, BUT FROM SOME RECENT MORE FUNDAMENTAL REVELS OF THEIR OWN, SIT UPON THE BROW OF A MOUNTAIN, WONDERING ABOUT THE WORLD BENEATH, AND COUNSELING HOW BEST TO BEAR A NOBLE PART, SEEING THAT HELL HAS MANIFESTLY CRACKED OPEN ACROSS SEVERAL CONTINENTS

NEAR the summit of Teyce Ten Eyck, as there are near the summits of several of the much-abraded Catskill peaks in the neighborhood, there is an unfailing spring of pure, cold water. Local tradition says that the great spring welling up from a cleft only a few hundred feet below the topmost crag of Bear Mountain, rises and lowers daily in response to the Atlantic tides. Most of the more sophisticated Woodbridgians deny this on general principles, not one of them, so far as is known, ever having gone up to see about it for himself. Perhaps not a dozen of them have been up to the nearer, and more accessible, if loftier, summit and smaller spring of Teyce Ten Eyck, even though they will tell you, with great enthusiasm, about the magnificent view from the summit, about the surprising spring, nearly three thousand feet above the valley, streaming up from a rock-hole as round as if drilled, not fifty feet below the eastern promontory of the second highest peak in the Catskills.

Two decades after the Civil War, a large summer hotel

was built near the spring, anchored down to the ledges by guy-chains to keep it from being blown down into the village, equipped with negro waiters, a swimming pool below the spring, a fine line of eatables and drinkables, and rates ranging from ten to thirty dollars per day. It never prospered greatly, due perhaps to the creeping nature of the two-hour drive up from Woodbridge, making it more than three hours from the railroad, and finally burned down, heavily insured, in 1908. Of late years, four or five picnic parties, always boarders, never natives, visit the summit during the boarding season.

Near the spot where the verandah of the hotel used to look southeastward across miles of enminiatured country—as far as New York City, granted binoculars and a fine day, any true Woodbridgian will tell you—successive generations of picnickers have built, and even gone some way toward furnishing, a small cabin. It began with a few half-burned beams from the old hotel, grew by the addition of boards from one of the old blown-down barns, spiked together by hand-wrought nails picked up among the ashes in the hotel cellar, and began to be furnished by articles left by picnickers who didn't want to carry down as much as they had carried up. Sudden rainstorms, especially prevalent on the summit, were the best incentive to work on the cabin itself; blistering hot days, which August brings occasionally even to a Catskill peak, were the best for new furnishings.

The cabin had no windows, nor any door in the doorway, but it partially redeemed these architectural defects by the great advantage of a small stone fireplace; the original board chimney had gradually been superseded

by piled stone, a change for the better that was made compulsory for all houses in Woodbridge in the year 1670, and was adopted by the Teyce Ten Eyck cabin only about two hundred and forty years later—a very creditable compliance with fire laws, all things considered.

Shelves ran along both sides of the six-by-ten room; one represented the butler's pantry, the other the library and general knick-knackery. The butler's pantry contained several Mason jars, one always full of coffee, the other of sugar,—since most picnickers came oversupplied with both commodities—several round coffee cans likely to contain a moldy scrap of bread, remnants that might once have been olives, or pickles, or bacon, or even an occasional unopened and usable can of these picnic delicacies. An especially large can, two-pound size, still bore, charcoaled across its rusty front in spite of the passage of some years, the enticing legend: "Fresh eggs." The contents, which were a great boon to every picnicking party, still had an undeniable odor of egg. Doubtless thoughtful picnickers added a fresh egg, from time to time, and renewed the charcoal legend, to the end that there might be greater joy in the hearts of the stout few adventurers who still visited the summit of Teyce Ten Eyck.

Under the shelves, on wooden pegs and nails, hung various discarded coats, hats, and sweaters, and on a birch beam that crossed midway the room at the level of the low eaves, a neatly folded steamer rug, still serviceable in spite of some rents, a tan army blanket, even more serviceable in spite of an accident with fire at one corner that had doubtless persuaded its former owner to leave it, and a red woolen blanket too grease-

stained to appeal except to great chilliness, waited hospitably for accidental discoverers. There was a rectangular slab of bluestone at one side, raised on boulders for legs, so that it made a very acceptable seat, or at a pinch a shortish couch for one who didn't mind cramping and hardness. Sections of beams and a large, square stone or two suggested seats along the opposite wall. The library, above them, offered a choice of "A Tale of Two Cities," "Little Women," or "A Naturalist on the Amazon" to the literarily minded. A pickle bottle, holding a few withered briary stems that might once have been wild roses, gave an esthetic touch.

On the stone slab above the little fireplace, someone had scratched hieroglyphics that might have been intended for "Welcome." Aged iron frying pans on either side, a rusty tin tobacco-can on the hearth labeled "Matches," and a dilapidated market basket half-full of pine cones, carried out the same idea in a more practical way. A bit of board over the not very successful attempt at a mantel-shelf announced: "Ten Eyck Inn. Rates, \$oo. a day, and down." It was before this announcement, revealed by the moonlight slanting in at the doorless doorway, that Clotilde and her Corporal stayed their soaring.

"Why, it's a perfect duck of an Inn!" exclaimed Clotilde, staring about. "Oh, look—'Fresh eggs!'"

"Say—" commented the Corporal, almost ready to believe it. "An egg wouldn't go so worse, fried in one of those old pans!" He took down the can, got off the rusty lid after a struggle, with Clotilde standing at his shoulder, remarked "Whee-ew!" while Clotilde backed rapidly away, and slapped the cover back into the place.

"Really—I shall report it to the proprietor!" she gasped, and they laughed themselves into each other's arms. It was a welcome let-down, for they had become a little serious and fearful about themselves with looking into their futures, during the last two hours of their climb, as man and maid who had decided to link their lives had a right to do, even if the war had not hung a dark background for all of their thoughts.

Clotilde, recovering from the effect of "Fresh eggs," made a housewifely search of the other cans, and discovered coffee, sugar, and a small can of baked beans, all in fair states of preservation. "At least we can have something—before we start back down," she said; "and now, since we might be accused of being *risqué* if we stayed here longer unchaperoned—settled married people though we seem to have become, for the most part—shan't we go out and take a peep at one of the most magnificent views in the Catskills—and talk some more?"

"It might be rather chilly out there," suggested the Corporal. "Maybe a good fire in here—"

"No," she interrupted: "if we're not really married—" She was turned partly from him, looking with peculiar intentness at the blankets that hung down from their birch beam. "If you won't feel that we're really married until that legal ceremony is performed—why, this intimate little inn is no place for us. I will be anything rather than conventionally *risqué*!" She fingered the blankets.

Corporal Townes straightened up as if about to salute, stared hard, swallowed hard, refused temptation. "No

—I shan't—feel that way," he admitted, with some effort. "No—I agree—we'd better make it—the view."

She turned toward him, surprised, breathing quickly between her half-parted lips. "Well, then—" she hazarded: she seemed unable to believe that she had understood him.

"Clo'—dear—please understand—please forgive me—maybe one reason I'm so keen on a conventional marriage is because I want this to be—different—in every way—don't you understand?" he stammered, apologized, explained.

She turned back toward the blankets. "That's the best reason—you could have given me," she said, rather weakly. "I suppose it explains a lot of Modernistic marriages." In spite of the excellence of the reason, it seemed to have aspects that made her ready to let it rest in peace. "Here—what are these?"

She carried two of them, the ultra-greasy red blanket and the tan army blanket, into the brighter moonlight of the doorway and looked them over. "One's horrible, but the other looks pretty good," she decided. "Bring that other one, please!" The Corporal brought the steamer rug. "That's pretty good, too—I can wear that, because I'll have on my heavy coat and the rents won't matter—you take the tan one—we can wrap up in them and be as comfortable as blanket Indians."

"Or bugs in a rug," suggested the Corporal.

"We're not bugs—I'm sure we're behaving with perfect propriety, prisms, and prunes," returned Clotilde, and led the way with great dignity, in spite of a reminiscence of the tail of an iguanodon in the trailing corner of her blanket, out to the edge of the bluestone cliff that dropped

away fifty paces in front of the cabin, found a niche in the rocks big enough for two if the two didn't mind close quarters, and sat down to appreciate the view. The Corporal, in all things, followed her lead.

They didn't appreciate the view, spacious and eerie and blue-misty with moonlight to distraction though it was. Their insignificance, their aloneness, up there in the huge, moon-vastened night, threw them back upon themselves, upon their smallness in the face of the large forces that gathered around their lives. Their little playtime mood, aroused by the ridiculous Inn, passed, leaving them once more eager to understand and appreciate each other's strange personalities while there was yet time—to press close to each other, rather spirit to spirit than body to body, even though the closeness of their bodies in that little cleft in the rocks was sweet, too.

Almost at once, Clotilde, reaching out to touch the spirit of her soldier, dishonored the much-bepraised view by saying, "It must be a little like being up in an airplane—although I suppose it doesn't seem anything like so high?"

"Yes, it does—it seems even higher," said the Corporal thoughtfully, given inward joy by the touch of her question, the intimate personal touch that spoke of her nearness to him. "You see, when you get up, you have nothing much to measure distance by—you just know you're up. And, when you see other 'planes above you, you feel quite low down, it doesn't matter what your paragraph reads."

Clotilde looked at him with faint perplexity on her face. "I can't understand it very well—all that part of

your life—you *do* look a little like an eagle—with your big nose—” She put her head down in the hollow of his shoulder; her voice softened almost to breaking: “ I suppose I shall be awfully afraid for you—my eagle!”

“ Oh, come! ” he demurred; “ I’m only—”

“ You needn’t adopt any comforting tone, man, dear! ” she reproved him. “ I’m not going to cry, or do anything foolish. Maybe I will, after you’re gone—but, just now, it seems too big—and everlastingly strange—I feel perfectly calm about it—although, perhaps, having you here with your arm around me helps in that! ”

He said: “ I’m glad you feel that way. That’s the effect you have on me—I hesitated to come out here, you know, because—I was afraid I *wouldn’t* be calm. When I left France—even after I’d landed in New York—I’m sure just sitting on the edge of a cliff like this would have made me weak and dizzy. Looking over the side of the steamer, down to the water, as we came into New York harbor, gave me a faint feeling of nausea—think of it! Oh, I’d about given up hope! ”

He had become rather disjointed. “ You mean, those were all effects of your breakdown? ” she asked. “ I don’t just see—how it happened.”

“ Well—I saw a newspaper report that got it pretty well; it said, among other things, that, some day, a little bell would ring inside the aviator’s head, and he’d know he was through. It’s the same with circus performers—high wire men, you know,—the continuous strain, helped by one good accident, will break the best of them—and send them to the country to raise chickens.”

“ Did you have an accident? ”

“ Yes—a few. But I didn’t start with the intention

of discussing my interesting case, dear—I started to try to thank you—”

“ What kind of accidents? ”

“ Oh, I’ve been shot down once, and had four or five smash-ups landing—you know those small-winged brutes have to land at about eighty miles an hour—just the ordinary run of accidents.—But, you see, dear, the cure for my trouble had to be a kind of spiritual rejuvenation —something everlasting deep, vital—They told me that, and smiled sympathetically, as a doctor might smile when he tells a paralytic that ten years off his age will cure him. You see, not one in ten who breaks as I did—ever comes back. But I was just going to say that I thought, maybe, I might come back—and if I do, I guess you’re—responsible.”

She asked, with great calmness, “ Do you really think my love—our love—might do that? ” But he knew, from her deepened breathing, how she was stirred.

“ I really think it’s *done* it, dear! If I don’t get excited, and wave my hat and hurrah, or anything—well, I’ll bet Lazarus’ sisters didn’t, either, when he was raised from the dead! Probably I feel a good deal as Lazarus’ sisters did—for I certainly never expected to see my flying-nerve again! I can’t tell you how good it is to sit here and feel calmed, soothed by this little height—instead of nauseated by it—and to feel something cool and settled—and everlasting confidence—in my very nerve-fibres. Of course I’ll never fly as I did when I was new at it—with a kind of drunken recklessness the beginners have—but I think I’ll have both nerve, and an intelligent regard for my own life, that may make me just as deadly!—And that’s quite enough of me and my:

except just to repeat—thank you, dear! And to remark that you—what you mean to me—seems already to have reached the very roots of my soul. Well, it's something to expect to be married—it's—it's rather *tremendous*, you know, when you come to think of it, Clo'!"

"And I suppose you didn't imagine there would be anything tremendous about it—that it would just be cheerful—and rather silly, perhaps,—I believe that's the commonly accepted young man's idea of getting engaged." She thought of Skeeter.

"No—no, not entirely," he protested; "but I didn't think it would make me feel so—well, everlastingly serious."

"Anyway, I thank God you do! I'd be most miserable if you didn't. Although, for me, I confess thinking of the war makes me feel more serious than anything else."

"Oh, I don't know—I've rather got used to the war—but this—you, Clo'—"

"And I suppose I'd rather got used to understanding what a real love would be like. But the war—I've hardly thought of the war at all—it seemed outside of everything I was interested in, some way—and now—now that it's come home to me with such a vengeance—Well, I'll have to try to understand the war—as much of it as I can. In its larger aspects, the war—it's—"

"I've sometimes thought of it as about two thousand miles of flaming Hell, cracked open across three continents," he put in.

She thought about that. "Yes, that's the bird's-eye view—the aviator's view, I suppose," she agreed; "but to me, here in Woodbridge where it began to force

itself on my attention—it seemed more like a dangerous disease, spreading, taking people's minds off nobler things, taking the young men away, perhaps to mutilation and death, leaving mothers, sisters, sweethearts either proud, or broken and anguished—or both:—yes, it seems to me more like some ancient plague that the world ought to have learned to abate, long ago. But, since the world hasn't, one ought to try to do something about it, I suppose."

"It doesn't seem so much like a plague to me—there's a suggestion of the hand of God—at least of no human design in a plague," he countered. "To me it seems more like a conflagration—or, as I said, more like Hell cracked open, by a Hell-worshiping people—intentionally cracked open so that Hell's high priests—in Germany—might seize the opportunity for murder, rape, pillage—a general loot and slaughter of their neighbors."

"Well—I can accept that—And still feel one ought to do something—"

"No Pacifistic tin dippers, beer-glasses, and tea-cups!" He was beginning to be aroused. "The thing to do is to sacrifice these Hell-lovers to their damned Moloch—as they've sacrificed others, and are trying to sacrifice millions more—to sacrifice them until they decide that decency and forbearance and respect as between men, and nations, too, is better than epidemic murder and looting! They're learning—the high priests of Moloch, beginning with the damned Kaiser and his neurotic ape of a son, down to the least of their devoted boy-slaves in the trenches—they're learning—"

"But if we could teach them without killing them, Clem—"

"Well, we can't—and if we stopped killing them to try, they'd be at our throats—looting, killing without mercy—that's their cry—might rules the world—the doctrine of their beloved Moloch—who teaches them to disregard scraps of paper and pity and justice—and will put half the German nation into Hell, along with their victims, before he's through with them! Dear, you can't argue with people who've made a religion of human sacrifice, of pillage, of thievery, and dishonor! When their sword is broken, when their power to put their religion into practice is stopped, we can begin to argue—after peace is declared, the real struggle between right and might—at least in Germany—may begin!"

"I think you're a better poet, now, Clem, than you were—when you used to write sonnets!"

"No—but, seriously, dear—don't you agree with me?"

"Yes, I do!" She smiled into his aroused and bitter face. "You've given more thought to this war-matter than I have—and I trust your brains in it, as you've trusted mine in—well, such a small matter as our love, dear—to which I may have given more thought than you. I—I'm glad you're going back, man, to—to help break their swords!"

He was uplifted by the cold calmness of her face. "I'll remember your face, like that, dear!" he told her. "You'll be—a proper saint for me to pray to!"

"Oh, my dear, if I only *could* guard you—bring you safe back—"

"I *think* I'll come back—I *feel* it—I have a kind of crazy trust in Providence," he interrupted, drawing her

head, with infinite tenderness, down to his shoulder. "I didn't have it over there, but I have now—and I hope I keep it. Providence, 'hunches,' all sorts of superstitions, flourish among erstwhile sane flying-men, you know. I confess, for instance, that I wouldn't light a cigarette from the match that had lighted two others! You don't know how much I tie to it, this new feeling that I'm not slated to die over there—that you seem to have given me—it's utterly baseless, of course,—and yet—"

"But perhaps there may be something in it! Will I—will having me, my hope, almost my very life, dear, in your hands—"

"Yes, it *will!* It will keep me from fumbling—I'll have something to pray to—and, God, how every soldier needs something to pray to! The Catholic Church may be re-established in France just on that cheap basis. But with you to think of, and pray to—with your name on my new boat—if you'll let me put it there—"

"*Yes, dear!*"

"Well—we'll break a good many Hunnish swords—you, and I—"

"But I'm not going to submerge my character altogether in yours!" she objected, with faint righteous, and Modernistic, indignation. "I want to help you, of course,—just as you've helped me—but I want to do something *myself*, too!"

He kissed her for that, and laughed chokily. "You're a good soldier! You can do something yourself—you can do a great deal—"

"Maybe I could get into the Red Cross," she interrupted, grimly intent on details. "I've had a course in

first aid—and they wouldn't turn me down, as they did poor Edna Kling, on physical grounds—”

“ Perhaps you could do something better than that. Our government is graciously permitting young ladies who can pay for a motor-truck, for its upkeep, and show an income of at least \$3,000 per year, to pilot supplies between Havre and various bases. I rather imagine—”

“ *That* is for me!” she interrupted; “ and, when you get leaves of absence—I suppose they'll give you leaves of absence once in a while?”

“ Yes—in a considerable while!”

“ Well, then, you could come over and be my assistant truck-man! Clem, think how gorgeous that will be—my lover—and, at the same time we'll be doing something for—”

“ For true Pacifism!” he supplied.

“ Yes—I'll take your word for it! Kiss me, Clem—I'm happy—I'm going to do something for—for Truth and Freedom, Clem—and I'm going to have you! It just comes over me how completely blessed—”

“ Oh, you are altogether—” He kissed her. “ —the most—you know, you remind me of something a certain of our own poets has said—Joyce Kilmer—just a line—in a bit of free verse he wrote to his wife—before he enlisted as a common soldier—I think it goes:

*Her soul is something elusive, whimsical, tender, wanton, infantile,  
wise  
And noble.*

Dear, those are good words—and you are like that!”

They held each other close for a little time, but she soon broke away like quicksilver, like quicksilver recently

warmed and excited: "How we *talk*—we've *talked*, *talked*, *talked*, for *hours*—but *now*—"

"Yes—we've got some of the divine afflatus—a drink like that which inspired Matthew Arnold's 'Strayed Reveller'—

*Faster, faster,  
O Circe, Goddess,  
Let the wild, thronging train,  
The bright procession  
Of eddying forms,  
Sweep through the soul!*"

Clotilde admitted enthusiastically, but with faint impatience, too: "Yes, dear—that's beautiful—and true as it applies to us—but—"

"There's *vers libre* for you—there's real Imagism!" enthused the Corporal, his stimulated soul full of a new eddying of forms. "In that, and in half a dozen other things, the mid-Victorian produced about the best free verse and Imagistic poetry so far written—before Modernism even discovered the names! Do you know, dear, I think a good deal of Modernism is precisely like that—it invents a patois, applies it to things quite ancient and familiar, and bellows about its discovery!"

"Yes, my critic! I confess I got some such idea from talking with my father, old Henry Hooghtyling—but, now, dear—"

"And the 'Strayed Revellers' idea, too—that isn't so bad as applied to us—to me, at least," the Corporal proceeded; "and to thousands of young folks like us! My life—it amounted to having a good time, a damned drunken riotous sort of a good time—what did I know about the Truth and Freedom I prattled about between

cocktails—between ‘parties,’ and sickly little love-affairs? There’s something in universal military training—and something more in a universal conscription of both men and women around the ages of twenty-one, collecting them and setting them to work for the benefit of their own souls and society at large—making low and high, rich and poor, rub elbows for a while—giving them some sense of responsibility, some feeling for their social unit—it would be especially good for all the young hopefuls that, as conditions are, have nothing to do but riot around, getting drunk and diseased in body and mind—”

“That’s *splendid!*” Clotilde was especially emphatic because special emphasis seemed to be needed to stop the steady flow of his philosophy. “I don’t want to interrupt you, dear,” she added, seeing that he was pretty well interrupted; “but we can just as well talk as we go down—come!” She rose, pulling him by the arm.

“As we go down?” he repeated feebly.

“Yes, dear—I think we’d better start, now. It’s nearly four o’clock.” She was eminently practical, if very much in earnest, and she showed him her wrist-watch to prove it. “By starting now we can get down in time to catch the early train for New York—and we ought to get the early train—for, of course, I want to see about my motor-truck, you know—and we’ll have to get married—and, oh, there’ll be a lot of other details to arrange—we really shouldn’t waste another minute—especially as we can just as well talk while we’re walking. There, give me your hand!”

The Corporal, in something of a maze, gave her his hand and helped her up to the cliff-top, at the height of their shoulders behind them.

"Now, dear," she continued, urging him competently toward the Inn, "we'll just fold our blankets, and leave them as we found them, and hurry right along."

The Corporal showed signs of insubordination while he stood, with his hands in his pockets, watching Clotilde's swift redispersion of the blankets: "But—I say—old friend—don't we eat, or anything? I thought you said something about a can of beans—I never thought I'd come to beans for breakfast—but before we start on that long hike, you know—a bean or two might help!"

"We simply haven't time, dear!" she informed him: "we'll just have to sandwich in our eating—as we will our *legal* marriage. We have no time for anything but just talking and—getting toward France! Why, what kind of a soldier are you to think of *eating* when we've got so many important things to do!"

"But I'm on leave," suggested the Corporal.

"Well, I'm not—I've just enlisted! Come on!" She annexed him by linking her arm in his, and started him off, in spite of his tendency to hang back. "Now, go on—talk!" she ordered him. "I love to hear you talk, dear—you do it well, when you're stirred up—and you've collected a lot of dope on important things that I haven't even thought about. So please go on—you were talking about the universal conscription of youth—not so much for military training—as for educational purposes, wasn't it?"

"Yes—and to keep 'em out of mischief—especially disorderly rioting and revelling around before they've got their bearings—and to give 'em a taste of democracy," admitted the Corporal: "but, say, Clo'—you tornado—if we're going right to New York, and expect to get

married there, won't we have to stand in line—waste a lot of time—waiting for a license?"

"Yes—as I said, it will be an inconvenience—but it can be arranged there easier than in Woodbridge, dear," she assured him. "Now don't bother your good head about practical details—I happen to know something about our barbarous marriage laws—learned about them in the course of that Greenwich Village rioting you were just denouncing. You can leave things to me—maybe one trouble with this war is that the women haven't got into it enough—they're infinitely more practical than you men, by and large—and war's certainly a practical matter—even though it's nice to hear you philosophize about it.—By the way, do you think this war is really going to change things—ideas, conditions? I mean, won't everything just fall right back to where it was before? I've heard somebody—maybe Carey Beemis—say that the war wouldn't leave a ripple in human nature—in fundamental human conditions: but, at least, I don't think *you* will fall back to what you were before—"

"Change things—it will change things, from top to bottom, as no war in all history's series of world-changing wars ever began to do!" decreed the Corporal, reacting at once, and violently.

"I thought perhaps you'd have an opinion on that, dear—"

"No man, no human being, who's been touched by this war, is going to be the same after it—and as for the larger changes—" The Corporal waved his arm across the horizon. "Why, just for one little detail, Wilson's recognition of the importance of the aims of the Bolsheviks means more to this country than Thomas Jeffer-

són's appropriation of the French Revolution's *Liberté*, *Égalité*, *Fraternité*, ever did! No matter what becomes of the Bolsheviks—of that astonishing Trotsky, who used to live up in the Bronx—of Lenine, who may, or may not, have taken German money. For myself, I think the history of the world will be roughly divided into two parts by this greatest of all conflicts, both between nations and ideals—international civilization will begin with the triumph of the Russo-American aims—a triumph perhaps rather in the minds of the peoples of the world than on battlefields—it may well be that the real conflict will begin after German militarism has been crushed. By the way, it's queer that we damn the poor Russians so thoroughly when the clearest statement of their war-aims is practically our own!"

"But I thought the Russians were practically Pacifists, dear?"

"Oh, Pacifists, Militarists—we've got to get new terms or re-define the old ones—I call myself a Pacifist, the only sort of an American Pacifist fit to look intelligent human beings in the face—and yet—often enough I've wished I could turn my old coffee-mill on the fools who mewl Pacifism in restaurants, and draw Save-Your-Skin cartoons, and write clever little *carte-blanches* for the continued progress of the German juggernaut, including its special equipment for making sausage meat of women and babies—Oh, *to Hell with our American Pacifists!*—whatever excuse the bedeviled Russians may have! Future generations will marvel at them—for myself, I've sent my regards to them on a westward gale, from five miles high—I've spit into the wind, and said: 'Carry that to the face of some greasy economist who's trying to oil

the German war-machine with debauched American ideals of freedom, justice—”

“Really, Clem, I don’t think you need worry about them so much. They’re changing—a little. In place of the old ‘Masses,’ for instance, Greenwich Village Pacifists are starting a new paper, called ‘The Liberator,’ which finds some good in the war—along the Russian lines you were just mentioning. At least, they no longer consider it absolutely negligible, uninteresting—”

“Oh, yes—I suppose anybody with a morsel of healthy gray matter must have come out of that juvenile attitude by this time—I suppose I’m just raving—but you’ll have to stand for it—because the stimulus of having you to talk to is largely responsible for my raving, dear. And they’re still around, the tribe of grunters are, too! I hesitated about punching the face of one of the pompadoured, Russian-faced fools I passed holding forth in Bryant Park on the way to Grand Central Station—Why bother about the cheap swine? I asked. But, thanks to you, I won’t feel that way as I go back—if I pass one, as I probably shall, I’ll stop long enough for an argument with him—by God, I will! Sending little tokens from France, even when there’s a west gale and you’re in the neighborhood of five miles high, is a bit too uncertain!”

“I don’t think you will, dear—I think it will be much better for you just to keep spitting into the wind—at five miles high. Of course I’ll be with you when you go through New York again, and I shan’t let you get into violent arguments with any pigs—who might have the law on their sides. The Anarchists are especially eager to appeal to the law, dear, although the Socialists

are almost as strong for it, even while advising the breaking of it on the side."

"Oh, of course you're right," he admitted; "maybe they're a minority that helps to keep the majority from losing its head—scum that keeps the pot from boiling over—they can be skimmed off and thrown into the garbage pail when their usefulness is ended."

"I hope you haven't turned Aristocrat, Clem!"

"Well—I have, to some extent. There's a new sort of Aristocracy over there," he ruminated, dawdling along: "a young Aristocracy of red blood and live brains—the sort of Aristocracy that's going to run things after this war is over. Among the best types of it I can think of are those English and Canadian volunteers who charged at Neuve Chapelle—those Frenchmen who said, in the flaming Hell of Verdun: '*Ils ne passeront pas!*' I've thought perhaps the best test of it is how a man measures his convenience, his life, up against—not Freedom, Justice, Liberty, Truth, so much, perhaps, as up against a kind of simple human dignity—the dignity and integrity of the individual and grouped human will. Those Aristocrats, with plenty of born aristocrats as well as many times as many born proles among them, are going over by the thousand in our new armies—fellows with solid self-respect and in a kind of temper, a disgust, a disdain, a rage for having it over with, that makes them deadly to the Teutonic idea—the continuous running of the world on the Hell-fire, rape, robbery, and murder plan. At bottom it's just a kind of dignity, an aroused selfhood, a kind of instinctive deep objection to having life or death or anything crammed down their throats by any power except their own wills,—individual and com-

bined—a demand both that they boss themselves, and that everybody who is of age and mentally competent be allowed the same privilege."

"That sounds," mentioned Clotilde, "like rank Anarchism."

"It is—although the name's filthied by men who care more for their individual stomachs and unwashed hides than they do for No-Rule. And it's Socialism, too,—since they have a regard for the social will, as well as for their own individual wills—even though the name 'Socialist' has been so dirtied by men whose social instincts stop with the attainment of personal safety and a two-cent drop in the price of soup-meat, not to mention the dirtying done by rank pro-Germans, that real Socialists will probably take a new name after the war. But these new Anarchist-Socialist-Aristocrats—Anarchists in upholding the dignity and freedom of every human being, Socialists in modifying that demand by the ideal of universal human brotherhood and the will of the social unit, Aristocrats in that they include the noblest blood of every nation—counting nobility both as brain-power to see far and straight and as nerve-power to offer life itself for the ideal envisioned—these fellows constitute a new order of nobility, as I see it—the nobility that is saving civilization today, and to which civilization will belong after it has been saved!"

"Oh, my dear—let's walk *faster!*" said Clotilde.



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